

A Rhode-Island Man, *Newport Mercury*, 25 February 1788

...I consider the new constitution as a large solid building, reared by the ablest architects, according to the rules of art and good taste, for the accommodation of a large family, and equally calculated for duration and convenience; but so contrived, that after the family shall have moved in, it may be altered with infinite ease whenever a majority of the family should require a change—The <completion < of the fabric was announced and the family called on to take a view, all parties confessed they wanted <the> house and the major part approved the work, declaring they could expect nothing more perfect from such a number of designers, who had <such> a variety of interests to accommodate, and determined to move in; while the minority were loud in their objections,—a party declared it was <— —> without any apartment <of> organization,—a second, who had studied building <and> house-keeping in Virginia, declared in a long <— — — —>, that they could not live in it with safety, <unless the> cooks and bakers were responsible and liable <to be> hanged, if they did not roast and bake to the taste of the family—a third said, there should have been a <— —> press framed with it—a fourth said that so large a house could not stand without a steeple,—a fifth objected to its being so contrived as to oblige the tenants of the manor to furnish provisions, declaring that the only sure way for the house to prosper was to trust to manna, quails, and a compliance with requisitions—a sixth said, it was too expensive,— a seventh said, it was not large enough, a party circulated with great earnestness that the designers had placed all the panes of glass upside down—a ninth¹⁰ said, he thought all these faults trivial, but that he had observed something in it truly abominable, which was, that they had so contrived the doors that a Turk, or a Jew might go in and out like a Christian,—a tenth said, such a house should be three square like a cocked hats as that is nearly the shape of the United States,— the eleventh said, it should have been round, because that figure contains the greatest space within a given line,—a twelfth said, that such an house should have been a regular polygon, with thirteen sides, one fronting to every State, except Rhode-Island,—a thirteenth declared, that he had <— —> building all night long by the north star for <— — — —> and that he was clear that it did not front <due north> by an angle of two minutes, which consideration <alone> was sufficient to reject it,—a fourteenth objected <to> hiring servants for two years, insisting that the safer way was to engage them every morning, this man was extremely attached to old custom, always ballancing his grist with a stone—a fifteenth, who had practised oeconomy in Virginia, after relating in a very handsome discourse, how much they had suffered for want of shelter, and how much more they were likely to suffer, very gravely advised them to lie out doors all winter, and if no alteration should be agreed on <— —> in the spring, what made this advice the more surprising was, that no two critics placed their <blame> on <the same> point, and, therefore, were as little likely to <agree> on their amendments as the parson's parishioners were to concur in the time when he should pray for rain. These, with numberless other objections, too tedious to mention, were heard with great patience and good humour by the majority, and confuted with superior mechanical reasoning.— When the family moved in, the apartments were light, warm, and clean, and on trial required

much fewer alterations than were expected by its most sanguine admirers; among the male-contents, those who <some time> had been to school in Boston and Connecticut, who like Roman gladiators fought with vigour and skill until overpowered by numbers, and yielded with a grace and decorum that gave them as much credit, if not as much pleasure, as a victory—by degrees the minority all came in, and when time had softened the asperity of opposition, they frankly owned they were glad they were out voted, all which was very agreeable to one who signs himself, A RHODE-ISLAND MAN.

1. The only extant issue of the *Newport Mercury* of 25 February is mutilated. The editors have placed questionable readings and unreadable words in angle brackets. Despite these difficulties, “A Rhode-Island Man” is a valuable addition to the debate over the Constitution in Rhode Island.

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