

**A Jerseyman: To the Citizens of New Jersey, *Trenton Mercury*, 6 November 1787
(excerpt)**

...Thus every guard which can be reasonably required seems to be made against improper encroachments. Now let me ask what will be the probable consequences of not adopting the proposed Constitution? With respect to ourselves in the first place, scenes of injustice between man and man may disclose themselves, contracts may be broken, and the means of redress possibly not in the power of our legislatures, notwithstanding their best intentions. Besides there are greater difficulties than many people imagine in procuring *national movements*; and the probability is that all the states would not be forward again in coming into such a measure speedily as forming another *federal convention*. The fatigue and disgust of our celebrated statesmen, who have lately gone through a four-months' labor of investigation, would also tend to prevent the attempt. These were men of acknowledged abilities and disinterested patriotism. If the result of their deliberations is not attended to, who will undertake again the arduous task? The same *difference of interests*, in different states, will remain, but the same friendliness and *wish for compromise and accommodation* will not exist after repeated vexatious trials and disappointments.

Let us also recollect our situation with respect to foreign powers. Some of them have lent Congress money during the late war. Can Congress insure the payment of either principal or interest? They may *require* but not enforce. They may *ask* but, if denied or neglected, there is no effectual remedy. Can this be called an efficient government? No, this part of it is laughed at by all Europe. But will these powers *only laugh* at our folly. They will in a short time do something more disagreeable to us. They will do justice to themselves by *seizing our merchants' ships and making reprisals on our property*. Well but, say they who are more successful in alarming and raising objections than in proposing better constitutions, would you have us adopt this without making alterations, when there are several things in it which had better be mended? Yes, I would—and for the following reasons.

Which *state convention* will undertake to mend it? Is it probable that any *one* state would sooner hit upon what should be for the *general good of the Union*, than the late *Federal Convention*, which was composed of representatives from *every state*? And if it was not for the benefit of the United States in general, but *only* of the individual state who proposed it, would it not in the first place immediately open a wide door for each state to propose many amendments which might be calculated only for the advancement of *local interest*? And in the next place, is it probable that a future convention (which at this rate would be necessary) would agree on better ground for the whole, than the late one? No, it would be idle to suppose it. It would serve but to procrastinate a delivery from our present distresses and tend very much, by exciting dissensions and quarrels, to our total dissolution as a nation. Although I drew my first breath in New Jersey, and have continued in it during my life, firmly attached to its *local interest*, yet when I consider the impossibility of its existence at present as a sovereign state without a *union* with others, I wish to feel myself more a citizen of the United States than of New Jersey alone. Our advancement and prosperity, nay, our very existence as a nation depends on our Union. That Union must have for its foundation the good of the whole

collectively considered. This, I think, is effectually done in the new Constitution. In portraying this plan, the collective interest is so mixed and blended in the general picture of the Union that happily the individual states are only distinguished as branches of that general family, without the whole of which the painting would be incomplete.

In many publications against the proposed system, the writers argue on a presumption that Congress will set themselves up against the liberties of their country. Their proceedings will not be *secret*. Their Journals are ordered in this very Constitution to be *published*, from time to time, for the inspection of all. Of whom will that body be composed? Of a Senate, who are to be appointed by the legislatures, who will be chosen by the *people*, and of a House of Representatives also chosen by the *people*. If either act wrong, they would doubtless be left out in their next choice.

While virtue and patriotism remain in the *people*, it will always, with due care, be found in the *representatives*. When the fountain is pure, the streams that issue from it must be clear.

It is high time to shake off unmanly fears and sneaking jealousies. You have, my countrymen, long been sensible of the *insufficiency of our present government*. You have sent your best and ablest friends to *form another*. After *four months' close application*, they have completed that which they now offer. Make a fair experiment. Further alterations are provided for when necessary. Think seriously and act like men.

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