

Cincinnatus V: To James Wilson, Esquire, *New York Journal*, 29 November 1787

Can you, O citizens of Philadelphia, so soon forget the constitution which you formed, for which you fought, which you have solemnly engaged to defend—can you so soon forget all this, as to be the willing ministers of that ambition...Reflect a moment—who wish to erect an aristocracy among you—Mr. Wilson and his party; who were your delegates in framing the constitution now proposed to you—Mr. Wilson, and his party; who harangues you to smooth its passage to your approbation—Mr. Wilson; who have you chosen to approve of it in your state convention—Mr. Wilson.—O sense where is your guard! shame where is your blush the intention of a state convention is, that a work of so great moment to your welfare, should undergo an examination by another set of men, uninfluenced by partiality or prejudice in its favor. And for this purpose you are weak enough to send a man, who was in the former convention, and who has not only signed his approbation of it, but stands forward as an agitator for it: is this man unprejudiced? would any man who did not suffer party to overcome all sense of rectitude, solicit or accept so improper a trust? ...What are we to expect from the work of such hands? But you must permit me to lay before you, from your own transactions, farther proofs of Mr. Wilson's consistency, and of his sacred attention to your rights, when he counsels you to adopt the new constitution.

You know that he was one of the convention that formed, and recommended to you, your state constitution. Read what is there laid down as a fundamental principle of liberty...O citizens of Philadelphia! do you hear, do you read, do you reflect? can you believe that the man means either wisely or honestly, who thus palpably contradicts himself, who treats with such levity, what your constitution declares to be one of your most sacred rights; and who betrays so little knowledge of ancient and modern history...Can you, O deluded men, not see that the object of all this, is to fix upon you, with your own consent, a strong government that will enable a few proud, intriguing, aristocratical men, to make you the instruments of their avarice and ambition, and trample upon your privileges at pleasure. Your privileges, did I say, I beg your pardon; after a surrender of every thing on your part, into the hands of a few, their pleasure will be your only privileges.

I beg you will pardon me, Mr. Wilson, for this digression: it is not a pleasant one, and I wish the cause of it had never existed. . . .

Did the generous confidence of your fellow citizens, deserve this mockery of their understandings; or inebriated with so unusual a thing as popularity, did you think that every rhapsody you uttered, would be received as reason? That you may not expose yourself again on this subject, give me leave to recommend to you to read Mr. Locke. . . .

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