

A Farmer, Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, 16, 23 April 1788

It is certainly incumbent on the supporters of this system, first to prove either that the uniform testimony of history, and experience of society, is false, or else that the new system will have the divine influence to inspire those who exercise the powers which it provides, with wisdom and virtue in an infallible degree. Surely the conduct of the framers and promoters of the new constitution, do not present mankind as more worthy of confidence now, than they have been in other periods of society. For proof of this let us examine facts. The legislature of the various states, elected members for a federal convention, without having authority for that purpose from their constituents; this gave no alarm, as necessity perhaps justified the measure, but how dangerous is the smallest precedent of usurped power, for the general convention when met, far out did the example—they were strictly bound by the law of their appointment to revise the confederation; the additional powers with which it ought to have been vested were generally understood, and would have been universally submitted to. This convention not only neglected the duty of their appointment, but assumed a power of the most extraordinary kind, they proceeded to destroy the very government which they were solemnly enjoined to strengthen and improve, and framed a system (to say no worse of it) that was destructive not only of the form, but of the nature of the government whose foundations were laid in the plighted faith and whose superstructure was cemented with the best blood of the United States. The legislature of this state, whose leading members were also self-chosen members of the general convention, no sooner had it in their power, than notwithstanding the solemn trust reposed in them, and still more solemn oath to preserve the constitution of this state inviolate, proceeded upon the expected last day of their session to call a convention, in order to adopt the proposed system of government before the people could be acquainted with it; and to carry this into execution, they added violence to perfidy, and by the aid of [a] mob compelled members, sanctified by their presence, that usurped exertion of power, which their faith and trust obliged them to discountenance. . . .

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