

**Compo: To the Head of the Wrongheads of New Haven County  
*Connecticut Courant*, 26 November 1787**

Not having offices enough before, you are now appointed a delegate to the state Convention and, with your usual *good temper and fairness*, are attacking the new Constitution. I have heard that soon after reading it, you expressed your disapprobation of it in terms as illiberal as possible; but above all things, you was “sorry it was to go to a convention of the people—had it been to be finally decided on by the Assembly we might have got rid of it.” I may have missed your very words, but the sentiment is preserved—and let us now examine this sentiment. You have been ostensibly one of the champions of the people and are the first to express a wish to prevent them from acting for themselves. From what motives you act it is not easy to determine; I am willing to believe you do not like the new Constitution because it militates against, your scheme of politics—against your *wall of brass*, which you want drawn round the United States, or rather round this state. It is no secret that your whole force has been directed against all union with the other states more than a league offensive and defensive—that you reprobate commerce and declaim against all mercantile pursuits and mercantile men. These are undoubtedly your private opinions, nor will I here undertake to combat them. The good sense of the farmers of this state will never suffer them, as a body, to adopt your narrow views and contracted opinions; they are too gross to be swallowed—and though you draw a set of men about you, and are supported by their votes, you may be assured they in general differ with you on the subject of commerce. Many of them support you in mere opposition to certain men who differ from them in other matters, and they make use of you, for the present, as a necessary man to keep out at least one of those men they fear. Had you argued against the new Constitution, I should have considered it, I should have left you to your own conscience; but the base attempts to slander John Adams, by misquoting and misrepresenting him, have made it necessary to detect you. You say, or rather insinuate, that he says the “wellborn ought to govern, and that the new Constitution is founded on his principles.” You would persuade the good people of this state that Mr. Adams has written a book which is calculated to enslave them and that the Convention have pursued his plan; with how much justice will appear by quoting the passage you have so basely misrepresented: “The rich, the wellborn, and the able acquire an influence among the people that will soon be too much for simple honesty and plain sense in a house of representatives. The most illustrious of them must therefore be separated from the mass and placed by themselves in a senate. This is to all honest and useful intents an ostracism.” Is it possible you could have read Mr. Adams—if you have, what a wicked unmanly perversion? If not, and you have taken it on trust from Mr. Copper [Joseph Hopkins], how mean and pitiful is your conduct? I defy you, sir, to produce one single sentiment in Mr. Adams’s volume of almost 400 pages that will bear such a construction as you have put on it; on the contrary, every part of it is calculated directly against such government as you are pleased to insinuate he is aiming to establish. And I earnestly recommend it to my countrymen to read Mr. Adams’s book; they will there find a true and correct history of all the republics, ancient and modern. They will there find that the causes of the fall of nations and the loss of their liberties has arisen from sources very different from what they have been told by you and your friend Copper. Your language and practice ever since your beginning to dabble in politics, and you

began early, has been exactly such as was usual for the demagogues in the republics that have been destroyed; they excited jealousies against their rulers and by degrees robbed the government of all its energy—all its dignity—and fitted the people for the chains of a despot.

To add one more proof of your wicked insinuations against Mr. Adams, I shall quote a few lines more from his book. After describing the government of the aristocratical Canton of Soleure, he says, “The soil is extremely fertile, yet there is a want of hands for agriculture, and population decreases; although commodiously situated for commerce, they have none. These circumstances are enough to show the blessings of a government by a few noble families.”

There is hardly one of Mr. Adams’s letters in which you do not find him pointedly against a government in the hands of the wellborn, as you are pleased to insinuate. What can be more clear and explicit than the above quotation? You appear to me to be one of those people which Mr. Adams describes, to wit, rich, wellborn, or able. I will not accuse you of being rich, though it is no secret that you have been well paid as one of the Council of Safety, deputy, committee for settling the army accounts, etc., etc., and that you know how to obtain and realize your pay, though many others had not that knowledge. Neither will I overrate your abilities—they are certainly not of the first rate, except in the article of obtaining places and pensions. Your promotion must then have arisen from your being wellborn, and this you certainly were in Mr. Adams’s sense, which will be better understood by quoting a few more lines from his letters.

“The son of a wise and virtuous father finds the world about him sometimes as much disposed as he himself is to honor the memory of his father, to congratulate him as the successor to his estate; and frequently to compliment him with elections to the offices he held. A sense of duty, his passions and his interest, thus conspiring to prevail upon him to avail himself of this advantage, he finds a few others in similar circumstances with himself. They naturally associate together and aid each other. This is a faint sketch of the source and rise of the family spirit. Very often the disposition to favor the family is as strong in the town, county, province, or kingdom as it is in the house itself. The enthusiasm is indeed sometimes wilder and carries away, like a torrent, all before it.”

Your ancestors have been respectable, and you may be said to be wellborn—indeed to your birth and connections may fairly be ascribed all your promotions. For when we call into view your career, and examine your conduct in all the various posts and places you have held, we do not find any strong traits of ability, except as a *General Officer*—there your PRUDENCE has been conspicuous—and it is to be hoped you have been kept out of danger to be a blessing to your country, for your safety has not been cheaply bought. The ghosts of Wooster and those who fell at Compo, do they not haunt you!

When I hear of your objections to the new Constitution it brings to my mind a passage in some of Mr. Addison’s writings against *Freethinkers*. He says, “he was walking in St. Paul’s church and beheld a fly upon one of the pillars, when it came into his head that this same fly was a freethinker; for it required some comprehension in the eye of the spectator to take in at one view the various parts of the building in order to observe the symmetry and design. But to the

fly, whose prospect was confined to a little part of one of the stones of a single pillar, the joint beauty of the whole or the distinct use of its parts were inconspicuous, and nothing could appear but small inequalities in the surface of the hewn stone, which in the view of that insect seemed so many deformed rocks and precipices.”

Want of time prevents me from making a recapitulation of Lord Sheffield’s politics respecting America and comparing them with yours, which in some future paper you may expect. If to think and act like him be a proof of your patriotism, I am persuaded I shall prove you the greatest patriot in America.

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