



A Dialogue Between Mr. Z and Mr. & Massachusetts Centinel, 7 November 1787 1

Mr. Z. Well met—come let us retire a few steps, perhaps we may be observed, and as I want to resume the subject we were upon the other evening, we cannot be too private—you know we then determined that JEALOUSY was the main string to touch, in order to effect the overthrow of the new Constitution?

Mr. &. Yes, and it seems we were fortunate in our idea—Observe the *antifederal* publications through the States, they abound in *surmises* and *prophesies*; the passion of jealousy appears to be their main object—with few, or no arguments, these writers wander in the fields of conjecture, [203 they know the people will derive from an adoption of this Constitution, they endeavour to haunt their imaginations with baseless probabilities, which may as well be drawn from any system of government *already established*, as from that proposed to the United States:—But, as the speculations of these people proceed from motives similar to our own, and as there are but comparatively a small proportion of mankind who penetrate beneath the surface of things, if the passions, humours and prejudices of the multitude can be interested to oppose any system, how far soever it may have truth for its basis, it will not succeed.

Mr. Z. There are however many obstacles we have to encounter in prosecuting our plan. It is too evident that this American Constitution has a very powerful and respectable body through the States to support it—The most active and zealous promoters of the revolution, whether in a civil or military line—the great body of the clergy—the independent body of yeomanry—farmers, who are unembarrassed in their circumstances, and have any thing to lose—the whole body of industrious mechanicks—the mercantile and trading interests—in short every man who supposes that the present unsettled state of affairs is owing to the want of government:—Besides these, we have to encounter your men of fortune, and professional men in every line, and those of every rank who are your people of sentiment, and are seriously affected, as they phrase it, with the fatal consequences of rejecting the proposed plan of Continental Government:—From such a combined force we have much to fear—and all our arts must be tried to render abortive their exertions.

Mr. &. True—but after all we need not despair—there is a goodly number who are embarked in the same bottom with us—we may reckon among these—all those who secretly rejoice at our present abject and distressed situation—the secret and inveterate enemies of the late revolution—of these, there are many who hope to see us reunited to Britain, and who know that the most direct method to effect the overthrow of Independency, and bring us back to the British Government, would be to cause a rejection of the new Constitution, as anarchy, confusion and bloodshed would ensue; and then a tyranny would be prefer[r]ed to no Government—add to these your *time-servers* and *popularity-seekers*, who appear to lay *perdue* at present—but if the current should set *against* the system, will undoubtedly go with the stream—there are likewise a goodly number of *paper-money gentry*, *bankrupts*, *land-jobbers*, *state-leeches*, *system-mongers*, *state-tinkers*, *idlers*, and *busy-bodies*—These may be grouped together, and safely reckoned on our side—for [204 

impregnable to all the secret and open attempts of *Britain*, and her emissaries—that *honesty* and *abilities* will recommend to offices of trust and importance, to the confusion of all *cunning politicians*; that industry and œconomy will be the only road to fortune, and paper-money jockeys must then go to work—in short I might go over the whole body separate and collective of those who are inimical to the new system, and point out their well-grounded fears, which harrow up their souls, should an efficient government be established, and truth, justice and publick faith again raise their heads through this otherwise devoted continent.—But you must be sensible by this time that this favourite plan must go through a fiery trial before it can be established?

Mr. Z. A fiery trial, indeed! if my poor abilities can be of any service in its opposition—my situation is peculiarly adapted to sow the seeds of jealousy—intelligence from such a source will be received with avidity—and having once kindled a small spark of disaffection, inferiour agents may blow it to a flame—we have already a few hands at work—I am mortified the number is so small—we have but two or three antifederal writers, who move in a circle, and talk *about it*, and *about it*—they keep themselves snug, however, which is much in our favour, for if they were *known*, their views would be seen through, which would effectually ruin the cause they advocate.—However, if they do but persevere and keep themselves out of sight, we have much to expect from their labours?

Mr. &. They keep themselves secreted in general, it is true; but it was an unlucky business the publication of a certain letter with the name at full length²—it may lead to an investigation of motives, that will not do our cause any good. I am really sorry for the accident—however, *labor omnia vincit*.³

1

For an earlier dialogue between “Mr. Z” and “Mr. &,” see *Massachusetts Centinel*, 31 October.

2

Probably a reference to Elbridge Gerry’s 18 October letter to the General Court, which was printed in the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 3 November. See 1 above, under 18 October.

3

“Labor conquers all things” (Latin).

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