

Spurious Centinel XV, *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 16 February 1788

One of the more popular items to appear in the *Pennsylvania Mercury* was a satirical essay entitled "Centinel" XV, which was published on 16 February, eleven days after the publication of "Centinel" XIV. On 19 February Antifederalist printer Eleazer Oswald of the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* announced that, despite a request of some of his customers, he would not reprint the spurious "Centinel" XV even though he had previously printed the first fourteen "Centinel" essays. He had "no doubt" that the article was "spurious."

Federalists were delighted with the spurious "Centinel." "One of Your Constant Readers" rejoiced that the piece "hit the mark," and he thought that the satirist had "taken Mr. Centinel as nearly on his own ground as any thing I have seen written yet on the subject, and would wish to see it inserted in every paper in the city." He also believed that "Centinel" was "a shame to the whole union, but more especially to Pennsylvania" (*Pennsylvania Mercury*, 21 February. "Thomas Noodle" satirically reported that his neighbor "Goosecap" believed that "the XVth Centinel was the most alarming number of them all—that it brought all the horrors of the new constitution into one point of view—into a kind of focus—that it brought them 'home to mens bosoms and business'—to their very feelings, and that it proved beyond a doubt, that we should have no more peace under it [the Constitution] than a toad under a harrow."

Friends, Countrymen, and Fellow-citizens! You have fought, you have bled, and you have conquered.—You have established your independence, and you ought to be free— But, behold! a set of aristocrats, demagogues, conspirators, and tyrants, have arisen up, and say you shall be governed—Is this to be endured by freemen,—men, who have lain in the open air, exposed to cold and hunger,—men who have worn out their health and constitutions in marches and counter-marches from one end of the continent to the other; and after they have attained the noble prize, for which they contended, are they to sit down tamely and be governed? Of what service is a man's liberty to him, unless he can do as he pleases? And what man can do as he pleases, who lives under a government?—The very end of government is to bind men down to certain rules and duties; therefore, 'tis only fit for slaves and vassals.—Every freeman ought to govern himself, and then he will be governed most to his own mind.

Thus, my friends, you see all government is tyrannical and oppressive. In the next place it is insulting: It is as much as to tell us, we know not how to take care of ourselves, and therefore should submit to be directed by others, who are appointed as guardians over so many wards. Now, of what use can our reason be to us, if after we have come (or ought to have come) to years of discretion, we are still to be led, guided, and bandied about by those who pretend to know better than we?—And, who pray are those who are to be thus led, guided, and bandied about? Why, the people!—Strange! that three millions of people should be led, guided, and bandied about by ninety or an hundred aristocratical, demagogical, tyrannical conspirators!—Would it not be more according to order, propriety, and the nature of things, that the ninety or an hundred conspirators should be led, guided, and bandied about by the three millions of people.

In the third place, all government is expensive; for these ninety or an hundred conspirators will not govern us for nothing, they must be paid for it.—Think on that, my countrymen, we must not only be governed, be insulted by being governed, but we must pay these demagogues for coming from all parts of the continent, to lay their heads together how to govern us most effectually—for this, we must pay them mileage, pay them wages, fill their purses, supply their tables to keep them in idleness to riot on the fat of the land, to plot, contrive, and juggle us into good order and government. Now all this money might be saved to the public, by each man governing himself, and

doing as he pleased, which by nature he has a right to do.

Oh my countrymen! my bowels yearn with affliction, when I think to what a pass we are likely to come—When I think, after all we have done and suffered for dear liberty, we must still be kept in order, and governed.—I had hoped, after our glorious struggle, this country would be an asylum for all those noble, untamed spirits, who were desirous of flying from all law, gospel, and government.—But alas! after all I have said and written, after all the inventions I have racked my brain for, and horrible descriptions I have laid before you, you are still unroused, and I have made no impression on any, except a few of those choice spirits at Carlisle.¹—And how have these been treated by the conspirators and federalists—they have been called insurgents, rioters, and British deserters—true, many of them were deserters, and to their credit be it spoken,—they deserted from king and country, friends and relations, wives and children, to come here and be free—they expected we were to be a free people, and they have come among us to live at large, and do as they please—Think then how disappointed they must be, and how peculiarly hard their case is, either to stay here and be governed, or to return and be hanged.

Rouse then, my friends, my countrymen, my fellow-citizens!—Rouse, ye Shayites, Dayites, and Shattuckites!²—Ye insurgents, rioters, and deserters!—Ye tories, refugees, and antifederalists!—Rouse, and kick up a dust before it is too late!—Be not such a parcel of stupid, dunder-headed, blunder-headed, muddle-headed, puddle-headed blockheads—Such a tribe of snivelling, drivelling, sneaking, slinking, moping, poking, mumping, pitiful, pimping, pettifogging, poltrons,—such a set of nincumpoops, ninny-hammers, mushrooms, jackasses, jackanapeses, jackadandies, goosecaps, tom-noodles, yahooes, shitepokes, and p—ssab—ds—Rouse!—awaken!—rub your eyes!—Do not you see the aristocrats, monocrats, demagogues, pedagogues, gogmagogs, brobdingnags, conspirators, and fœderal hobgoblins, are preparing to govern you, to enslave you, enthrall you, and bemaule you.—If you submit to them, they will rob you of your liberties—they will tie you hand and foot,—they will play hob with you, play the dickens with you, and play the d—v—l with you—they will put halters round your necks, and hold your noses to the grindstone—they will purge you and bleed you, glister you and blister you, drench you and vomit you—they will tread on your toes, break your shins, dock your tails, draw your teeth, tear your hair and scratch out your eyes,—they will pull your noses, lug your ears, punch you in the guts, and kick you in the breech—ZOUNDS! will nothing rouse you!

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