

Curtius I, New York *Daily Advertiser*, 29 September 1787

ADDRESS to all FEDERALISTS.

Friends and Countrymen, An individual, who never has been, nor has any ambition at present to be honored by marks of public distinction, presumes to address you. When Common Sense declared it to be the time to try men's souls,¹ he engaged in your service; nor left it, till the Court of Britain declared you independent. In common with yourselves, he felt a noble enthusiasm warm his breast in the cause of Freedom; and, he trusts, the generous flame is still unextinguished. Animated in the hope of your prosperity, he beheld, without a sigh, the fair expectations of affluence, to which he was born, blasted by the wanton cruelty of an enemy, and by injustice and fraud, sanctified by law: And now, should you embrace the heaven-sent opportunity to secure to yourselves the invaluable blessings of Liberty and Independence, he shall still glory in every sacrifice.

The Constitution of Government proposed to your acceptance, reflects the highest honor upon its compilers; and adds a lustre, even to the names of Washington and Franklin! Whether it meets your approbation, or not, it will excite the plaudit of the world; and your enlightened posterity will mark it as an exalted instance of American genius. Here we view the sources of *energy*, *wisdom* and *virtue*, delicately combined. Here the *Legislative*, *Executive*, and *Judicial* powers are completely separated, exactly defined, and accurately balanced. Here are instituted the wisest checks to ambition in the rulers, and to licentiousness in the ruled. Here we find the most admirable fetters to self-interest, and the most indestructible securities of civil liberty. Here we behold the greatest concessions made by the strongest; and, if any partiality is shewn, it is in favor of the weak.—Should it remind you of the Government of Poland, you will reflect, that the *mode* and *frequency* of electing our Executive Head, completely evade the confusion of an elective Monarchy. But, what is more probable, should it remind of a Government, once justly dear to us—then let us enquire, where, among foreign nations, are the people who may boast like Britons? In what country is justice more impartially administered, or the rights of the citizen more securely guarded? Had our situation been sufficiently contiguous; had we been justly represented in the Parliament of Great-Britain; to this day we should have gloried in the peculiar, the distinguished blessings of our political Constitution. But, even here, the Federal Government rises in the comparison. For in this we find the avenues of corruption and despotism completely closed. No Lords strut here with supercilious haughtiness, or swell with emptiness; but virtue, good sense and reputation alone ennoble the blood, and introduce the Plebeian to the highest offices of State. Our Executive Head is mediately dependent upon the People; he has no power to grant pensions, to purchase an undue influence, or to bribe in a fancied representation of the commons. All dignities flow from yourselves: those, indeed, of the Judicial kind, not so immediately, as your own experience must have convinced you is proper. That the people of a free Government mean right, when, frequently, they *think wrong*, is a truth which renders it indispensable, that certain of their servants should feel so independent, as to be unswayed by popular caprice and

error. But, in forming this Constitution, your Delegates were not obliged to look abroad for assistance; many approved models were to be found at home, the excellencies and deficiencies of which experience had already discovered.

Perhaps, to point out such obvious advantages, some may deem affrontive to the good understanding of Americans, or unnecessary until attempts are made to deceive them. It is, moreover, beside the intention of this address; which was to exhort your most earnest attention to the present important crisis of public affairs. Never have you seen a period replete with more extensive consequences. Unbiased and impartial, examine, then, for yourselves, how worthy that system of Government is, which the collected wisdom of the nation has recommended to your acceptance. Study and scrutinize its various parts; survey, with a jealous eye, the profound intelligence and policy it discloses. And, when once your minds are persuaded of its propriety, determine with unanimity, and with decided resolution to adopt, support, and perpetuate it.

Think not that such an eventful revolution, so great and so promising, should meet with no opposition. Nothing great or good, of the kind, ever commenced or ever existed without it. Opposition will arise from a variety of sources. A few will be actuated by a vain spirit of contention, or affectation of singularity. Some will prattle of chimerical dangers, to shew their superior discernment, or to obtrude themselves into notice. Even low wit and buffoonery shall raise their silly weapons. Perhaps you will be told, among Anti-Federalists, that, when the new Government is established, “money will grow upon the trees”—that “Washington has been duped”—that “Franklin has grown old”²—that “Pinckney and Hamilton are boys.”—Thus far opposition merits your contempt. But the fears of the jealous, of the undiscerning, and of the ignorant, among each of which classes there may be men of integrity and principle: the obstinacy of prepossession and party spirit: the secret intrigues of the ambitious; and clamours of avarice and self interest; these will be exerted to undermine your prospects of national felicity, and of these you should be aware. To hear from them any thing like solid argument, or calm discussion, is scarcely to be expected. From popular rumor, I have not as yet been able to collect an attempt of this kind, that merits your slightest regard. The ground of controversy is now changed. Every objection, from the purse and the sword being entrusted to one body of men, is now removed, by the different organization of the Federal Head: objections which had weight with many of your real friends, and have had their full force granted in the construction of the present system. These objections were formerly answered by an appeal to necessity. For, better was it that the efficient powers of Government should be lodged any where, than no where: better in one delegated Assembly, mutable in its members, and removable at your pleasure, than in no Assembly at all. For, certainly, rigid order, in society, is preferable to licentious disorder; and an absolute Monarchy, to an absolute Anarchy. <The people of Virginia, some time since, in instructions to their Representatives, speaking of Congress, declare, “that the melioration of a Constitution, founded upon such false and incompatible principles, seems in every view almost impossible; but expedients proposed, which require the unanimous concurrence of thirteen separate Legislatures, differing in interests, distinct in habits, and opposite in prejudices, have so repeatedly failed, that they no longer furnish a ray of hope:—We pray, therefore, for the day, when we shall see a national

Convention sit, composed of the best and ablest men in the Union, a majority of whom shall be invested with the power of altering it. It is now so bad, as to defy the malice of fortune and ingenuity to make it worse.”>

If opposition is made in your public assemblies, which I have hope will not be the case, from the means of information time will give all classes of people, you will find ignorance and artifice endeavoring to shroud themselves from public contempt, under an affected silence; and perhaps not the shadow of an argument produced in support of a dead vote. For shame, electors! let not the good sense of Americans be thus represented; but if men do appear in your legislative bodies in support of a bad cause, let them at least be able to gild its deformity.

But should you ratify the proceedings of your Convention, the happy event will form an epocha, more peculiar in its nature, more felicitating in its consequences, and more interesting to the philosophic mind, than ever the political history of man has displayed. Where is the country in which the principles of civil liberty and jurisprudence are so well understood as in this—and where has ever such an assembly of men been deputed for such a purpose? To see an assemblage of characters, most of them illustrious for their integrity, patriotism and abilities, representing many Sovereign States; framing a system of Government for the whole, in the midst of a profound peace; unembarrassed by any unfavorable circumstance abroad, uninfluenced by any selfish motive at home; but making the most generous concessions to each other for the common welfare, and directing their deliberations with the most perfect unanimity—to see a Constitution of Government thus formed, and fraught with wisdom, economy, and foresight, adapted to the political habits of their constituents, to the state of Society and civilization, to the peculiar circumstances of their country, and to those enlightened sentiments of freedom and toleration, so dear to all good men—and, finally, to see this Constitution ratified and adopted by several millions of people, inhabiting an extensive country, not from any coercion, but from mere principles of propriety, wisdom, and policy—these are objects too great, and too glorious, to be viewed with common admiration and delight—the idea alone is animating to every bosom, susceptible of the emotions of patriotism or philanthropy—the attempt alone reflects a dignity upon human nature, and the execution secures freedom and public happiness to remote posterity.

This great event will disclose the meaning of those many astonishing providences, which gave timely aid to American arms in the just struggle for independence. From this it will appear, that these were not intended to usher in, upon this recent theatre of cultivated humanity, the horrors of domestic jarring; but to establish, upon the firmest basis, Union, freedom, and tranquillity. The prerogative of the great Guardian of Nations, to educe good from evil, will become illustrious. Our reproach abroad, and disarrangement at home, will but shew us, in contrast, the magnitude and propriety of our change. The light of prosperity will but shine the brighter, as just bursting from the dissipated clouds of injustice, avarice, and ambition.

Let us then be of one heart, and of one mind. Let us seize the golden opportunity to secure a stable Government, and to become a respectable nation. Let us be open, decided, and resolute, in a good cause. Let us render our situation worthy the ashes of our slaughtered brethren, and our own sufferings. Let us remember our emblem, the

twisted serpent, and its emphatical motto, *Unite or Die*. This was once written in blood; but it is as emphatical now as then. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Our national existence depends as much as ever upon our Union; and its consolidation most assuredly involves our prosperity, felicity, and safety.

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