

## **HIST 5453 – New American Republic**

Dr. Keith Pacholl

By Deb Wold

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### **The Federalist and Antifederalist Papers**

#### **Response Paper**

The Federalist Papers show concern of resistance from others. In the first page of this document, the author states “Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument, and consequence of the offices they hold under the State establishments.” Federalist #30 shows this concern while discussing the topic of taxation. On page 8 of this document, he states “The more intelligent adversaries of the new Constitution admit the force of this reasoning; but they qualify their admission by a distinction between what they call INTERNAL and EXTERNAL taxation.”

A second theme I saw was the idea of having one government for the states. This is discussed on page 4 of the document which is the Federalist #12. The author states “It is therefore evident, that one national government would be able, at much less expense, to extend the duties on imports, beyond comparison, further than would be practicable to the States separately, or to any partial confederacies.” Federalist #23 continues this thought on pages 5 and 6 of the document stating “This power ought to be coextensive with all the possible combinations of such circumstances; and ought to be under the direction of the same councils

which are appointed to preside over the common defense.” Federalist #51 summarizes his opinion into two main points on page 11. “There are, moreover, two considerations particularly applicable to the federal system of America... First. In a single republic, all the power surrendered by the people is submitted to the administration of a single government... Second. It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part.”

The letters that are considered Antifederalist have two distinct themes that stood out. The first is the concern of too much of an extravagant government. In other words, there may be too many people involved in the government which can cause chaos, confusion, and lack of control. Samuel Bryant wrote a letter to the Freeman of Pennsylvania on October 5, 1787 reviewing John Adams' style of government that holds three parts. On page two of his letter, Bryant states “This hypothesis supposes human wisdom competent to the task of instituting three co-equal orders in government, and a corresponding weight in the community to enable them respectively to exercise their several parts, and whose views and interests should be so distinct as to prevent a coalition of any two of them for the destruction of the third.” Bryant continues on page 3 of his letter stating “The highest responsibility is to be attained, in a simple structure of government, for the great body of the people never steadily attend to the operations of government, and for want of due information are liable to be imposed on—If you complicate the plan by various orders, the people will be perplexed and divided in their sentiments about the source of abuses or misconduct, some will impute it to the senate, others to the house of representatives, and so on, that the interposition of the people may be rendered imperfect or perhaps wholly abortive.” Bryant closes his letter on page 7 stating his concern: “Besides, it cannot be supposed, that the first essay on so difficult a subject, is so well digested, as it ought to be,—if the proposed plan,

after a mature deliberation, should meet the approbation of the respective States, the matter will end, but if it should be found to be fraught with dangers and inconveniencies, a future general Convention being in possession of the objections, will be the better enabled to plan a suitable government.” Lastly, a stand-out quote caught my attention on page 15 of this document. Toward the end of Patrick Henry’s speech which was given on June 5, 1788, he states “Besides, it cannot be supposed, that the first essay on so difficult a subject, is so well digested, as it ought to be,—if the proposed plan, after a mature deliberation, should meet the approbation of the respective States, the matter will end, but if it should be found to be fraught with dangers and inconveniencies, a future general Convention being in possession of the objections, will be the better enabled to plan a suitable government.”

The second theme I saw throughout is Lack of trust for those making these decisions regarding the government. This is a major overtone I heard throughout the documents. The authors are worried that the new government will fail and turn back into a monarchy. The tone is clear on page 4 of Samuel Bryant’s letter to the Freemen of Philadelphia. This theme continues on in a letter written on November 15, 1787 by Abraham Yates under the name of Brutus to the citizens of New York. On page 7 of the document, he states “have attempted to shew, that a consolidation of this extensive continent, under one government, for internal, as well as external purposes, which is evidently the tendency of this constitution, cannot succeed, without a sacrifice of your liberties; and therefore that the attempt is not only preposterous, but extremely dangerous...” He continues on in his letter on page 10 of this document he states “The more I reflect on this subject, the more firmly am I persuaded, that the representation is merely nominal—a mere burlesque; and that no security is provided against corruption and undue influence.” Patrick Henry’s speech which was mentioned previously discusses this idea on page

14 of the document. Henry uses strong descriptive words to show his distrust. “Two thirds of the Congress, or of the state legislatures, are necessary even to propose amendments. If one third of these be unworthy men, they may prevent the application for amendments; but what is destructive and mischievous, is that three fourths of the state legislatures, or of the state conventions, must concur in the amendments when proposed! In such numerous bodies, there must necessarily be some designing, bad men.”