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FEDERALIST PAPERS ***

THE FEDERALIST PAPERS

By

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John Jay,

James Madison

CONTENTS

FEDERALIST No. 1. General Introduction

FEDERALIST No. 2. Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence

FEDERALIST No. 3. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence)

FEDERALIST No. 4. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence)

FEDERALIST No. 5. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence)

FEDERALIST No. 6. Concerning Dangers from Dissensions Between the States

FEDERALIST No. 7. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning Dangers from Dissensions Between the States)

FEDERALIST No. 8. The Consequences of Hostilities Between the States

FEDERALIST No. 9. The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection

FEDERALIST No. 10. The Same Subject Continued (The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection)

FEDERALIST No. 11. The Utility of the Union in Respect to Commercial Relations and a Navy

FEDERALIST No. 12. The Utility of the Union In Respect to Revenue

FEDERALIST No. 13. Advantage of the Union in Respect to Economy in Government

FEDERALIST No. 14. Objections to the Proposed Constitution From Extent of Territory Answered

FEDERALIST No. 15. The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union

FEDERALIST No. 16. The Same Subject Continued (The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union)

FEDERALIST No. 17. The Same Subject Continued (The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union)

FEDERALIST No. 18. The Same Subject Continued (The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union)

FEDERALIST No. 19. The Same Subject Continued (The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union)

FEDERALIST No. 20. The Same Subject Continued (The Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the Union)

FEDERALIST No. 21. Other Defects of the Present Confederation

FEDERALIST No. 22. The Same Subject Continued (Other Defects of the Present Confederation)

FEDERALIST No. 23. The Necessity of a Government as Energetic as the One Proposed to the Preservation of the Union

FEDERALIST No. 24. The Powers Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered

FEDERALIST No. 25. The Same Subject Continued (The Powers Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered)

FEDERALIST No. 26. The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered.

FEDERALIST No. 27. The Same Subject Continued (The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered)

FEDERALIST No. 28. The Same Subject Continued (The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered)

FEDERALIST No. 29. Concerning the Militia

FEDERALIST No. 30. Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST No. 31. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 32. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 33. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 34. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 35. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 36. The Same Subject Continued
(Concerning the General Power of Taxation)

FEDERALIST No. 37. Concerning the Difficulties of the
Convention in Devising a Proper Form of Government.

FEDERALIST No. 38. The Same Subject Continued, and
the Incoherence of the Objections to the New Plan Exposed.

FEDERALIST No. 39. The Conformity of the Plan to
Republican Principles

FEDERALIST No. 40. On the Powers of the Convention to
Form a Mixed Government Examined and Sustained.

FEDERALIST No. 41. General View of the Powers
Conferred by The Constitution

FEDERALIST No. 42. The Powers Conferred by the
Constitution Further Considered

FEDERALIST No. 43. The Same Subject Continued (The
Powers Conferred by the Constitution Further Considered)

FEDERALIST No. 44. Restrictions on the Authority of the
Several States

FEDERALIST No. 45. The Alleged Danger From the
Powers of the Union to the State Governments.

FEDERALIST No. 46. The Influence of the State and
Federal Governments Compared

FEDERALIST No. 47. The Particular Structure of the New
Government and the Distribution of Power Among Its
Different Parts.

FEDERALIST No. 48. These Departments Should Not Be
So Far Separated as to Have No Constitutional Control Over
Each Other.

FEDERALIST No. 49. Method of Guarding Against the
Encroachments of Any One Department of Government by
Appealing to the People Through a Convention.

FEDERALIST No. 50. Periodical Appeals to the People
Considered

FEDERALIST No. 51. The Structure of the Government
Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the
Different Departments.

FEDERALIST No. 52. The House of Representatives

FEDERALIST No. 53. The Same Subject Continued (The
House of Representatives)

FEDERALIST No. 54. The Apportionment of Members
Among the States

FEDERALIST No. 55. The Total Number of the House of Representatives

FEDERALIST No. 56. The Same Subject Continued (The Total Number of the House of Representatives)

FEDERALIST No. 57. The Alleged Tendency of the New Plan to Elevate the Few at the Expense of the Many Considered in Connection with Representation.

FEDERALIST No. 58. Objection That The Number of Members Will Not Be Augmented as the Progress of Population Demands.

FEDERALIST No. 59. Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members

FEDERALIST No. 60. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members)

FEDERALIST No. 61. The Same Subject Continued (Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members)

FEDERALIST No. 62. The Senate

FEDERALIST No. 63. The Senate Continued

FEDERALIST No. 64. The Powers of the Senate

FEDERALIST No. 65. The Powers of the Senate Continued

FEDERALIST No. 66. Objections to the Power of the Senate To Set as a Court for Impeachments Further Considered.

FEDERALIST No. 67. The Executive Department

FEDERALIST No. 68. The Mode of Electing the President

FEDERALIST No. 69. The Real Character of the Executive

FEDERALIST No. 70. The Executive Department Further Considered

FEDERALIST No. 71. The Duration in Office of the Executive

FEDERALIST No. 72. The Same Subject Continued, and Re-Eligibility of the Executive Considered.

FEDERALIST No. 73. The Provision For The Support of the Executive, and the Veto Power

FEDERALIST No. 74. The Command of the Military and Naval Forces, and the Pardoning Power of the Executive.

FEDERALIST No. 75. The Treaty-Making Power of the Executive

FEDERALIST No. 76. The Appointing Power of the Executive

FEDERALIST No. 77. The Appointing Power Continued and Other Powers of the Executive Considered.

FEDERALIST No. 78. The Judiciary Department

FEDERALIST No. 79. The Judiciary Continued

FEDERALIST No. 80. The Powers of the Judiciary

FEDERALIST No. 81. The Judiciary Continued, and the Distribution of the Judicial Authority.

FEDERALIST No. 82. The Judiciary Continued.

FEDERALIST No. 83. The Judiciary Continued in Relation to Trial by Jury

FEDERALIST No. 84. Certain General and Miscellaneous Objections to the Constitution Considered and Answered.

FEDERALIST No. 85. Concluding Remarks

FEDERALIST No. 1. General Introduction

**For the Independent Journal.
Saturday, October 27, 1787**

HAMILTON

To the People of the State of New York:

AFTER an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting federal government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part

we shall act may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

This idea will add the inducements of philanthropy to those of patriotism, to heighten the solicitude which all considerate and good men must feel for the event. Happy will it be if our choice should be directed by a judicious estimate of our true interests, unperplexed and unbiased by considerations not connected with the public good. But this is a thing more ardently to be wished than seriously to be expected. The plan offered to our deliberations affects too many particular interests, innovates upon too many local institutions, not to involve in its discussion a variety of objects foreign to its merits, and of views, passions and prejudices little favorable to the discovery of truth.

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; and the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandize themselves by the confusions of their country, or will flatter themselves with fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies than from its union under one government.

It is not, however, my design to dwell upon observations of this nature. I am well aware that it would be disingenuous to resolve indiscriminately the opposition of any set of men (merely because their situations might subject them to suspicion) into interested or ambitious views. Candor will oblige us to admit that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and it cannot be doubted that much of the opposition which has made its appearance, or may hereafter make its appearance, will spring from sources, blameless at least, if not respectable—the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. So numerous indeed and so powerful are the causes which serve to give a false bias to the judgment, that we, upon many occasions, see wise and good men on the wrong as well as on the right side of questions of the first magnitude to society. This circumstance, if duly attended to, would furnish a lesson of moderation to those who are ever so much persuaded of their being in the right in any controversy. And a further reason for caution, in this respect, might be drawn from the reflection that we are not always sure that those who advocate the truth are influenced by purer principles than their antagonists. Ambition, avarice, personal animosity, party opposition, and many other motives not more laudable than these, are apt to operate as well upon those who support as those who oppose the right side of a question. Were there not even these inducements to moderation, nothing could be more ill-judged than that intolerant spirit which has, at all times, characterized political parties. For in politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution.

And yet, however just these sentiments will be allowed to be, we have already sufficient indications that it will happen in this as in all former cases of great national discussion. A torrent of angry and

malignant passions will be let loose. To judge from the conduct of the opposite parties, we shall be led to conclude that they will mutually hope to evince the justness of their opinions, and to increase the number of their converts by the loudness of their declamations and the bitterness of their invectives. An enlightened zeal for the energy and efficiency of government will be stigmatized as the offspring of a temper fond of despotic power and hostile to the principles of liberty. An over-scrupulous jealousy of danger to the rights of the people, which is more commonly the fault of the head than of the heart, will be represented as mere pretense and artifice, the stale bait for popularity at the expense of the public good. It will be forgotten, on the one hand, that jealousy is the usual concomitant of love, and that the noble enthusiasm of liberty is apt to be infected with a spirit of narrow and illiberal distrust. On the other hand, it will be equally forgotten that the vigor of government is essential to the security of liberty; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well-informed judgment, their interest can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidden appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants.

In the course of the preceding observations, I have had an eye, my fellow-citizens, to putting you upon your guard against all attempts, from whatever quarter, to influence your decision in a matter of the utmost moment to your welfare, by any impressions other than those which may result from the evidence of truth. You will, no doubt, at the same time, have collected from the general scope of them, that they proceed from a source not unfriendly to the new Constitution. Yes, my countrymen, I own to you that, after having given it an attentive consideration, I am clearly of opinion it is your interest to adopt it. I am convinced that this is the safest course for your liberty, your dignity, and your happiness. I affect not reserves which I do not feel. I will not amuse you with an appearance of deliberation when I have decided. I frankly acknowledge to you my convictions, and I will freely lay before you the reasons on which they are founded. The consciousness of good intentions disdains ambiguity. I shall not, however, multiply professions on this head. My motives must remain in the depository of my own breast. My arguments will be open to all, and may be judged of by all. They shall at least be offered in a spirit which will not disgrace the cause of truth.

I propose, in a series of papers, to discuss the following interesting particulars:

THE UTILITY OF THE UNION TO YOUR POLITICAL PROSPERITY THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE PRESENT CONFEDERATION TO PRESERVE THAT UNION THE NECESSITY OF A GOVERNMENT AT LEAST EQUALLY ENERGETIC WITH THE ONE PROPOSED, TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS OBJECT THE CONFORMITY OF THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION TO THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT ITS ANALOGY TO YOUR OWN STATE CONSTITUTION and lastly, THE ADDITIONAL SECURITY WHICH ITS ADOPTION WILL AFFORD TO THE PRESERVATION OF THAT SPECIES OF GOVERNMENT, TO LIBERTY, AND TO PROPERTY.

In the progress of this discussion I shall endeavor to give a satisfactory answer to all the objections which shall have made their appearance, that may seem to have any claim to your attention.

It may perhaps be thought superfluous to offer arguments to prove the utility of the UNION, a point, no doubt, deeply engraved on the hearts of the great body of the people in every State, and one, which it may be imagined, has no adversaries. But the fact is, that we already hear it whispered in the private circles of those who oppose the new Constitution, that the thirteen States are of too great extent for any general system, and that we must of necessity resort to separate confederacies of distinct portions of the whole.⁽¹⁾ This doctrine will, in all probability, be gradually propagated, till it has votaries enough to countenance an open avowal of it. For nothing can be more evident, to those who are able to take an enlarged view of the subject, than the alternative of an adoption of the new Constitution or a dismemberment of the Union. It will therefore be of use to begin by examining the advantages of that Union, the certain evils, and the probable dangers, to which every State will be exposed from its dissolution. This shall accordingly constitute the subject of my next address.

PUBLIUS

1. The same idea, tracing the arguments to their consequences, is held out in several of the late publications against the new Constitution.

FEDERALIST No. 2.

Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence

For the Independent Journal.
Wednesday, October 31, 1787

JAY

To the People of the State of New York:

WHEN the people of America reflect that they are now called upon to decide a question, which, in its consequences, must prove one of the most important that ever engaged their attention, the propriety of their taking a very comprehensive, as well as a very serious, view of it, will be evident.

Nothing is more certain than the indispensable necessity of government, and it is equally undeniable, that whenever and however

it is instituted, the people must cede to it some of their natural rights in order to vest it with requisite powers. It is well worthy of consideration therefore, whether it would conduce more to the interest of the people of America that they should, to all general purposes, be one nation, under one federal government, or that they should divide themselves into separate confederacies, and give to the head of each the same kind of powers which they are advised to place in one national government.

It has until lately been a received and uncontradicted opinion that the prosperity of the people of America depended on their continuing firmly united, and the wishes, prayers, and efforts of our best and wisest citizens have been constantly directed to that object. But politicians now appear, who insist that this opinion is erroneous, and that instead of looking for safety and happiness in union, we ought to seek it in a division of the States into distinct confederacies or sovereignties. However extraordinary this new doctrine may appear, it nevertheless has its advocates; and certain characters who were much opposed to it formerly, are at present of the number. Whatever may be the arguments or inducements which have wrought this change in the sentiments and declarations of these gentlemen, it certainly would not be wise in the people at large to adopt these new political tenets without being fully convinced that they are founded in truth and sound policy.

It has often given me pleasure to observe that independent America was not composed of detached and distant territories, but that one connected, fertile, wide-spreading country was the portion of our western sons of liberty. Providence has in a particular manner blessed it with a variety of soils and productions, and watered it with innumerable streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants. A succession of navigable waters forms a kind of chain round its borders, as if to bind it together; while the most noble rivers in the world, running at convenient distances, present them with highways for the easy communication of friendly aids, and the mutual transportation and exchange of their various commodities.

With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established general liberty and independence.

This country and this people seem to have been made for each other, and it appears as if it was the design of Providence, that an inheritance so proper and convenient for a band of brethren, united to each other by the strongest ties, should never be split into a number of unsocial, jealous, and alien sovereignties.

Similar sentiments have hitherto prevailed among all orders and denominations of men among us. To all general purposes we have uniformly been one people each individual citizen everywhere enjoying the same national rights, privileges, and protection. As a nation we have made peace and war; as a nation we have vanquished our common enemies; as a nation we have formed alliances, and