

The Antifederalist Papers No. 8 The Power Vested in Congress of Sending Troops For Suppressing Insurrections Will Always Enable Them to Stifle the First Struggles of Freedom

"A FEDERAL REPUBLICAN" (from Virginia) had his `letter to the editor' appear in The Norfolk and Portsmouth Register March 5, 1788.

.... By the Articles of Confederation, the congress of the United State was vested with powers for conducting the common concerns of the continent. They had the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war; of sending and receiving ambassadors; of entering into treaties and alliances; and of pointing out the respective quotas of men and men which each state should furnish. But it was expressly provided that the money to be supplied by each state should be raised by the authority and direction of the legislature thereof-- thus reserving to the states the important privilege of levying taxes upon their citizens in such manner as might be most conformable to their peculiar circumstances and form of government. With powers thus constituted was congress enabled to unite the general exertions of the continent in the cause of liberty and to carry us triumphantly through a long and bloody war. It was not until sometime after peace and a glorious independence had been established that defects were discovered in that system of federal government which had procured to us those blessings. It was then perceived that the Articles of Confederation were inadequate to the purposes of the union; and it was particularly suggested as necessary to vest in congress the further power of exclusively regulating the commerce of the United States, as well to enable us, by a system more uniform, to counteract the policy of foreign nations, as for other important reasons. Upon this principle, a general convention of the United States was proposed to be held, and deputies were accordingly appointed by twelve of the states charged with power to revise, alter, and amend the Articles of Confederation. When these deputies met, instead of confining themselves to the powers with which they were entrusted, they pronounced all amendments to the Articles of Confederation wholly impracticable; and with a spirit of amity and concession truly remarkable proceeded to form a government entirely new, and totally different in its principles and its organization. Instead of a congress whose members could serve but three years out of six--and then to return to a level with their fellow citizens; and who were liable at all times, whenever the states might deem it necessary, to be recalled-- Congress, by this new constitution, will be

composed of a body whose members during the time they are appointed to serve, can receive no check from their constituents. Instead of the powers formerly granted to congress of ascertaining each state's quota of men and money-to be raised by the legislatures of the different states in such a mode as they might think proper- -congress, by this new government, will be invested with the formidable powers of raising armies, and lending money, totally independent of the different states. They will moreover, have the power of leading troops among you in order to suppress those struggles which may sometimes happen among a free people, and which tyranny will impiously brand with the name of sedition. On one day the state collector will call on you for your proportion of those taxes which have been laid on you by the general assembly, where you are fully and adequately represented; on the next will come the Continental collector to demand from you those taxes which shall be levied by the continental congress, where the whole state of Virginia will be represented by only ten men! Thus shall we imprudently confer on so small a number the very important power of taking our money out of our pockets, and of levying taxes without control-a right which the wisdom of our state constitution will, in vain, have confided to the most numerous branch of the legislature. Should the sheriff or state collector in any manner aggrieve you either in person or property, these sacred rights are amply secured by the most solemn compact. Beside, the arm of government is always at hand to shield you from his injustice and oppression. But if a Continental collector, in the execution of his office, should invade your freedom (according to this new government, which has expressly declared itself paramount to all state laws and constitutions) the state of which you are a citizen will have no authority to afford you relief. A continental court may, indeed, be established in the state, and it may be urged that you will find a remedy here; but, my fellow citizens, let me ask, what protection this will afford you against the insults or rapacity of a continental officer, when he will have it in his power to appeal to the seat of congress perhaps at several hundred miles distance, and by this means oblige you to expend hundreds of pounds in obtaining redress for twenty shillings unjustly extorted? Thus will you be necessarily compelled either to make a bold effort to extricate yourselves from these grievous and oppressive extortions, or you will be fatigued by fruitless attempts into the quiet and peaceable surrender of those rights, for which the blood of your fellow citizens has been shed in vain. But the latter will, no doubt, be the melancholy fate of a people once inspired with the love of liberty, as the power vested in congress of sending troops for suppressing insurrections will always enable them to stifle the first struggles of freedom.

A FEDERAL REPUBLICA