

## **The Antifederalist Papers No. 10** ***On the Preservation of Parties, Public Liberty*** ***Depends***

This essay follows a theme similar to Federalist No. 10, and appeared in the Maryland Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser, March 18, 1788.

The opposite qualities of the first confederation were rather caused by than the cause of two parties, which from its first existence began and have continued their operations, I believe, unknown to their country and almost unknown to themselves-as really but few men have the capacity or resolution to develop the secret causes which influence their daily conduct. The old Congress was a national government and an union of States, both brought into one political body, as these opposite powers-I do not mean parties were so exactly blended and very nearly balanced, like every artificial, operative machine where action is equal to reaction. It stood perfectly still. It would not move at all. Those who were merely confederal in their views, were for dividing the public debt. Those who were for national government, were for increasing of it. Those who thought any national government would be destructive to the liberties of America . . . assisted those who thought it our only safety-to put everything as wrong as possible. Requisitions were made, which every body knew it was impossible to comply with. Either in 82 or 83, ten millions of hard dollars, if not thirteen, were called into the continental treasury, when there could not be half that sum in the whole tract of territory between Nova-Scotia and Florida. The States neglected them in despair. The public honor was tarnished, and our governments abused by their servants and best friends. In fine, it became a cant word things are not yet bad enough to mend. However, as [a] great part of the important objects of society were entrusted to this mongrel species of general government, the sentiment of pushing it forward became general throughout America, and the late Convention met at Philadelphia under the uniform impression, that such was the desire of their constituents. But even then the advantages and disadvantages of national government operated so strongly, although silently, on each individual, that the conflict was nearly equal. A third or middle opinion, which always arises in such cases, broke off and took the lead-the national party [thus] assisted, pursued steadily their object- the federal party dropped off, one by one, and finally, when the middle party came to view the offspring which they had given birth to, and in a great measure reared, several of them immediately disowned the child. Such has been hitherto the progress of party; or rather of the human mind dispassionately contemplating our separate and relative situation, and aiming at that perfect completion of social happiness and grandeur, which perhaps can be combined only in ideas. Every description of men entertain the same wishes (excepting perhaps a few very bad men of each)-they forever will differ about the mode of accomplishment-and some must be permitted to doubt the practicability.

As our citizens are now apprized of the progress of parties or political opinions on the continent, it is fit they should also be informed of the present state, force and designs of each, in order that they may form their decisions with safety to the public and

themselves-this shall be given with all the precision and impartiality the author is capable of.

America is at present divided into three classes or descriptions of men, and in a few years there will be but two.

[First]. The first class comprehends all those men of fortune and reputation who stepped forward in the late revolution, from opposition to the administration, rather than the government of Great Britain. All those aristocrats whose pride disdains equal law. Many men of very large fortune, who entertain real or imaginary fears for the security of property. Those young men, who have sacrificed their time and their talents to public service, without any prospect of an adequate pecuniary or honorary reward. All your people of fashion and pleasure who are corrupted by the dissipation of the French, English and American armies; and a love of European manners and luxury. The public creditors of the continent, whose interest has been heretofore sacrificed by their friends, in order to retain their services on this occasion. A large majority of the mercantile people, which is at present a very unformed and consequently dangerous interest. Our old native merchants have been almost universally ruined by the receipt of their debts in paper during the war, and the payment in hard money of what they owed their British correspondents since peace. Those who are not bankrupts, have generally retired and given place to a set of young men, who conducting themselves as rashly as ignorantly, have embarrassed their affairs and lay the blame on the government, and who are really unacquainted with the true mercantile interest of the country-which is perplexed from circumstances rather temporary than permanent. The foreign merchants are generally not to be trusted with influence in our government-- they are most of them birds of passage. Some, perhaps British emissaries increasing and rejoicing in our political mistakes, and even those who have settled among us with an intention to fix themselves and their posterity in our soil, have brought with them more foreign prejudices than wealth. Time must elapse before the mercantile interest will be so organized as to govern themselves, much less others, with propriety. And lastly, to this class I suppose we may ultimately add the tory interest, with the exception of very many respectable characters, who reflect with a gratification mixed with disdain, that those principles are now become fashionable for which they have been persecuted and hunted down-which, although by no means so formidable as is generally imagined, is still considerable. They are at present wavering. They are generally, though with very many exceptions, openly for the proposed, but secretly against any American government. A burnt child dreads the fire. But should they see any fair prospect of confusion arise, these gentry will be off at any moment for these five and twenty years to come. Ultimately, should the administration promise stability to the new government, they may be counted on as the Janizaries of power, ready to efface all suspicion by the violence of their zeal.

In general, all these various people would prefer a government, as nearly copied after that of Great Britain, as our circumstances will permit. Some would strain these circumstances. Others still retain a deep rooted jealousy of the executive branch and strong republican prejudices as they are called. Finally, this class contains more

aggregate wisdom and moral virtue than both the other two together. It commands nearly two thirds of the property and almost one half the numbers of America, and has at present, become almost irresistible from the name of the truly great and amiable man who it has been said, is disposed to patronize it, and from the influence which it has over the second class. This [first] class is nearly at the height of their power; they must decline or moderate, or another revolution will ensue, for the opinion of America is becoming daily more unfavorable to those radical changes which high-toned government requires. A conflict would terminate in the destruction of this class, or the liberties of their country. May the Guardian Angel of America prevent both!

[Second]. The second class is composed of those descriptions of men who are certainly more numerous with us than in any other part of the globe. First, those men who are so wise as to discover that their ancestors and indeed all the rest of mankind were and are fools. We have a vast overproportion of these great men, who, when you tell them that from the earliest period at which mankind devoted their attention to social happiness, it has been their uniform judgment, that a government over governments cannot exist - that is two governments operating on the same individual - assume the smile of confidence, and tell you of two people travelling the same road - of a perfect and precise division of the duties of the individual. Still, however, the political apothegm is as old as the proverb - That no man can serve two masters - and whoever will run their noddles against old proverbs will be sure to break them, however hard they may be. And if they broke only their own, all would be right; but it is very horrible to reflect that all our numskulls must be cracked in concert. Second. The trimmers, who from sympathetic indecision are always united with, and when not regularly employed, always fight under the banners of these great men, These people are forever at market, and when parties are nearly equally divided, they get very well paid for their services. Thirdly. The indolent, that is almost every second man of independent fortune you meet with in America - these are quite easy, and can live under any government. If men can be said to live, who scarcely breathe; and if breathing was attended with any bodily exertion, would give up their small portion of life in despair. These men do not swim with the stream as the trimmers do, but are dragged like mud at the bottom. As they have no other weight than their fat flesh, they are hardly worth mentioning when we speak of the sentiments and opinions of America. As this second class never can include any of the yeomanry of the union, who never affect superior wisdom, and can have no interests but the public good, it can be only said to exist at the birth of government, and as soon as the first and third classes become more decided in their views, this will divide with each and dissipate like a mist, or sink down into what are called moderate men, and become the tools and instruments of others. These people are prevented by a cloud from having any view; and if they are not virtuous, they at least preserve the appearance, which in this world amounts to the same thing.

[Third]. At the head of the third class appear the old rigid republicans, who although few in number, are still formidable. Reverence will follow these men in spite of detraction, as long as wisdom and virtue are esteemed among mankind. They are joined by the true democrats, who are in general fanatics and enthusiasts, and some few sensible, charming madmen. A decided majority of the yeomanry of America will, for a length of

years, be ready to support these two descriptions of men. But as this last class is forced to act as a residuary legatee, and receive all the trash and filth, it is in some measure disgraced and its influence weakened. 3dly. The freebooters and plunderers, who infest all countries and ours perhaps as little as any other whatever. These men have that natural antipathy to any kind or sort of government, that a rogue has to a halter. In number they are few indeed such characters are the offspring of dissipation and want, and there is not that country in the world where so much real property is shared so equally among so few citizens, for where property is as easily acquired by fair means, very few indeed will resort to foul. Lastly, by the poor mob, infoelix pecus!! The property of whoever will feed them and take care of them-let them be spared. Let the burden of taxation sit lightly on their shoulders. But alas! This is not their fate. It is here that government forever falls with all its weight. It is here that the proposed government will press where it should scarcely be felt. . . .

In this [third] class may be counted men of the greatest mental powers and of as sublime virtue as any in America. They at present command nearly one-third of the property and above half the numbers of the United States, and in either event they must continue to increase in influence by great desertions from both the other classes. . . . If the [proposed] government is not adopted, theirs will be the prevalent opinion. The object of this class either is or will be purely federal-an union of independent States, not a government of individuals. And should the proposed federal plan fail, from the obstinacy of those who will listen to no conditional amendments, although such as they cannot disapprove; or should it ultimately in its execution upon a fair trial, disappoint the wishes and expectations of our country-[then] an union purely federal is what the reasonable and dispassionate patriots of America must bend their views to. My countrymen, preserve your jealousy-reject suspicion, it is the fiend that destroys public and private happiness. I know some weak, but very few if any wicked men in public confidence. And learn this most difficult and necessary lesson: That on the preservation of parties, public liberty depends. Whenever men are unanimous on great public questions, whenever there is but one party, freedom ceases and despotism commences. The object of a free and wise people should be so to balance parties, that from the weakness of all you may be governed by the moderation of the combined judgments of the whole, not tyrannized over by the blind passions of a few individuals.

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