

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Reflections on "The Late Remarkable Revolution in Government": Aedanus Burke and Samuel Bryan's Unpublished History of the Ratification of the Federal Constitution*

In the aftermath of their loss in the battle over ratification of the Constitution, a number of prominent Antifederalists started work on histories intended to vindicate their cause. Mercy Otis Warren, Abraham Yates, and Aedanus Burke all began histories of the Constitutional struggle. Only one of these Antifederalist histories, Mercy Otis Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*, eventually found its way into print. While Abraham Yates's unfinished history has figured prominently in modern scholarly discussions of Antifederalist thought, scarcely any attention has been devoted to Aedanus Burke's historical project. This neglect is especially unfortunate, for Burke's project was in many respects the most complex historical inquiry undertaken by anyone involved in the ratification struggle.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations* (Boston, 1805). A copy of the chapters pertaining to the ratification struggle has been reprinted and published as part of the anthology of Antifederalist writings edited by Herbert J. Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist* (7 vols., Chicago, 1981), 6:195-249. The original copy of the Yates history manuscript is in the Abraham Yates Papers (New York Public Library). This manuscript has been edited with an introduction by Staughton Lynd, "Abraham Yates's History of the Movement for the United States Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 20 (1963), 223-45.

Burke, a leading South Carolina jurist, was a vocal opponent of the Constitution and a noted pamphleteer in his home state. He intended his "History of the late remarkable revolution in Government" to be a collaborative endeavor, and he enlisted the support of Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and Samuel Bryan of Pennsylvania to aid him in his effort.<sup>2</sup> To obtain the necessary information to complete his history, Burke sent detailed questionnaires to both Gerry and Bryan so that he might better comprehend the nature of the struggle over ratification in the different regions of the country. The inquiries were intended to identify the main actors involved in the ratification struggle and the means utilized to secure adoption of the Constitution. Burke even went so far as to break down the population along economic, geographic, and gender lines. He inquired not only about the attitudes of these various groups towards the Constitution but also sought to determine their motives for supporting or opposing the new frame of government.

Burke never published his history, and all that remains of his effort are a copy of his questions and Bryan's detailed replies. In his responses to Burke's inquiry, Bryan provided an impressive discussion of the forces shaping the outcome of ratification in Pennsylvania. His analysis is among the most sophisticated comments on the Constitutional struggle penned by any contemporary. Indeed, when Bryan's historical observations are set against the work of such other Antifederalist historians as Yates, Warren, or even Burke, it becomes readily apparent that Bryan was one of the most perceptive and farsighted political commentators among the Antifederalists.

Burke's historical interpretation of the ratification struggle can be pieced together from the structure of his query. An outspoken critic of the Constitution, Burke hoped to further the cause of republicanism by publishing an Antifederalist account of the ratification struggle. At the same time that Burke contemplated writing his history, he

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Gerry's copy of Burke's inquiry disappeared when a trunk containing the query was stolen. The questions disappeared before Gerry even had a chance to read them. As a result of this mishap, we have no idea how Gerry would have responded to Burke's queries. The contents of the missing trunk are listed in Elbridge Gerry to Ann Gerry, Nov. 15, 1789, Gerry-Knight Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society). Luckily for historians, Bryan's copy of the questionnaire remained in his hands long enough for him to produce a detailed set of replies.

was actively working with other Antifederalist representatives in Congress to secure amendments that would have substantially weakened the powers granted to the new federal government. He hoped that his history would demonstrate that the Federalists had been engaged in a systematic plot to undermine liberty. His history would thus serve to discredit his political enemies and rally support for the Antifederalist agenda for amendments.<sup>3</sup>

Burke's own historical thinking was deeply influenced by the Whig rhetoric of the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Like so many Whig thinkers, Burke was ever on his guard, alert to the continual dangers posed by designing men who were forever plotting against liberty. Guided by the logic of Whig thought, Burke quite naturally saw the movement for the Constitution as the outcome of a deliberate plot against liberty by a secret cabal.

Postwar politics had done little to allay his fears about the dangers of conspiracy. The founding of the Society of Cincinnati in 1783 struck many contemporary observers like Burke as a particularly dangerous sign of a declining commitment to true republican Whig ideals. The Society was composed of officers drawn from the ranks of the Continental Army. A mere fraternal organization of military officers would not have provoked the ire of stalwart republicans like Burke. The Cincinnati, however, was far more than a fraternal organization of retired Revolutionary officers. While the Society consciously sought to evoke the memory of the venerable republican figure of Cincinnatus, few of its members actually emulated the Roman leader by retiring from politics and returning to the life of private virtue and yeoman independence.<sup>5</sup> From the moment of its inception, the Society became actively involved in the political debates

<sup>3</sup> My own understanding of Burke's motives for writing a history benefited from reading a section of John Meleney's forthcoming study of Burke. I would also like to thank Mr. Meleney for alerting me to Gerry's involvement in Burke's historical project.

<sup>4</sup> The centrality of conspiracy theory to Anglo-American Whig political culture is a major concern of Bernard Bailyn in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1967); the close connections between Whig political thought, conspiracy theory, and Enlightenment history are developed by Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982), 401-41.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the importance of Cincinnatus as a model of republican rectitude, see Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (New York, 1984).

of the new nation. Members of the Cincinnati were among the most vocal proponents of a stronger central government. Opponents of the Cincinnati, many of whom would later become vocal Antifederalists, attacked the Society, charging that it sought to establish a hereditary nobility. Immediately after the founding of the Cincinnati, Burke took up his pen to denounce the organization. He predicted that "this Order is planted in a fiery, hot ambition, and thirst for power; and its branches will end in tyranny . . .," adding that "this is the natural result of an establishment, whose departure is so sudden from our open professions of republicanism."<sup>6</sup>

While many future Federalists thundered against the anarchy they discerned in the years immediately following independence, Burke was far more concerned about the dangers of aristocracy and monarchy. The Cincinnati was only the first of several plots Burke railed against. Hardly four years passed before Burke again came forward to expose what he believed was another conspiracy against American liberty. In early 1787 Burke openly attacked the British merchant community of Charleston for meddling in local elections. He excoriated British merchants for the "ruinous schemes they are driving at against this country" and attacked them for their "perpetual cabals and machinations."<sup>7</sup>

When Burke turned his attention to the events surrounding the movement to ratify the new federal Constitution, he quite naturally saw a cabal at work and blamed the Society of the Cincinnati and the British merchants for playing a vital role in this new conspiracy

<sup>6</sup> *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati* (Philadelphia, 1783), 4. The best historical account of the Society is Minor Myers, Jr., *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of Cincinnati* (Charlottesville, 1983). Mercy Otis Warren saw the formation of the Society as a symptom of a more general decline in republican sentiment: Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, chapter 31. Elbridge Gerry was particularly concerned about the danger posed by the Cincinnati. Gerry's hostility to the Society is discussed by George A. Billias, *Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman* (New York, 1976). Attacks on the Society played a prominent role in the Antifederalists' attempt to portray Federalists as proponents of monarchy and aristocracy.

<sup>7</sup> "Memorial of Aedanus Burke, Citizen of Charleston," *The Charleston Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 7, 1787. For a discussion of Burke's concerns about the British merchant community in Charleston, see George Rogers, Jr., "Aedanus Burke, Nathanael Greene, Anthony Wayne, and the British Merchants of Charleston," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 67 (1966), 75-83.

against liberty. The movement to ratify the Constitution was, he believed, the most recent episode to subvert the achievements of the Revolution. Burke was convinced that Federalists sought to restore the twin evils of monarchy and aristocracy. His obsession with conspiracy shaped the questions he sent Bryan and informed his own historical interpretation of the Constitutional struggle.<sup>8</sup>

Burke forwarded Bryan a copy of his questionnaire in late 1789. Bryan was a natural choice as a collaborator since he had been among the most active participants in the ratification struggle within Pennsylvania. As the author of the "Centinel" and "Dissent of the Minority," two of the most widely circulated and influential Antifederalist attacks on the Constitution, Bryan was uniquely qualified to comment on ratification in Pennsylvania. A committed opponent of the "aristocratic party" in his own state, Bryan was only too happy to aid Burke in his effort. He felt that a history of the "late remarkable revolution in Government" would be "highly advantageous to the interests of republicanism." Eager to aid this cause, Bryan resolved to provide detailed answers to Burke's questions. Indeed, Bryan was so committed to this project that after having received Burke's lengthy questionnaire, he immediately sought out additional help so that he might provide Burke with a complete account of the political and economic climate in Pennsylvania before and during the struggle over ratification.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Aedanus Burke to John Lamb, June 23, 1788, John Lamb Papers (New-York Historical Society). General assessments of ratification in South Carolina include the following works: George Rogers, Jr., "South Carolina Ratifies the Federal Constitution," *South Carolina Historical Association Proceedings* 31 (1961), 41-62; Robert A. Rutland, *The Ordeal of the Constitution: The Antifederalists and the Ratification Struggle of 1787-1788* (Norman, 1966), 162-69; and Steven R. Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition: Antifederalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Millwood, 1979), chapter 5. For evidence of Burke's concern with conspiracy in his questionnaire, see questions 4, 14-17.

<sup>9</sup> To gain the requisite information, Bryan approached John Nicholson, the Comptroller General of Pennsylvania and the man who coordinated the state Antifederalist campaign. Apparently, Nicholson never answered Bryan's inquires, so the latter simply responded to Burke's questionnaire without any outside assistance. Samuel Bryan to John Nicholson, Nov. 21 and Dec. 5, 1789, Nicholson Papers (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). For more on Nicholson's role in the ratification campaign, see Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition*, chapter 3. Little scholarly attention has been devoted to the political thought of Samuel Bryan. Brief discussions of Bryan's thought as the "Centinel" may be found in Cecelia Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Govern-

Although Bryan concurred with Burke's assessment of the key facts surrounding ratification, he departed from him on a number of crucial historical issues, including the motivations of Federalist sympathizers and the mechanisms by which the Federalists succeeded. Bryan's understanding of ratification was less dependent on conspiracy. Although he accepted the common Antifederalist view that the leading Federalist politicians acted as an aristocratic cabal, he did not then proceed to argue that the conspiracy extended throughout the ranks of Federalist supporters. His own thinking about politics was shaped by an understanding of political economy that was far more complicated than that of Burke and many other Antifederalists.<sup>10</sup>

Like Burke, Bryan believed that the economic hardships of the Confederation era were largely responsible for the call to revise the Articles of Confederation, and like most Antifederalists, he accepted the need to grant Congress greater power to regulate commerce. However, Bryan was willing to move well beyond the narrow proposals for reform favored by many leading Antifederalists. In 1785 he wrote to his father, George Bryan, with his own proposals for granting Congress "in the most unlimited manner" the authority to "impose duties on any article of commerce or restrict it in such a way as they please or to prohibit the importation or exportation of anything what so ever." While acknowledging the necessity of allowing Congress greater control over financial matters, Bryan remained wary of the dangers of providing Congress with such considerable power. A successful policy, he noted, would grant Congress additional

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ment," *William and Mary Quarterly* 12 (1955), 3-43; Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chapel Hill, 1961); and Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York, 1969). Bryan's "Letters of Centinel" originally appeared in the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer* and the Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, Oct. 1787-April 1788. His "The Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of Pennsylvania to their Constituents," was published in the *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 18, 1787.

<sup>10</sup> Bryan's analysis of the economic forces shaping political life in the new nation was far more complex than either of the explanations provided by Warren or Yates. The latter two saw the political struggles in terms of the traditional court/country dichotomy that had characterized English political history. For a useful overview of the literature on the court/country divide and its relevance to the ratification struggle, see James Hutson, "Country, Court and Constitution: Antifederalism and the Historians," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981), 337-68. For the histories of Yates and Warren, see note 1.

authority without allowing Congress the freedom for "absorbing all power and influence within their vortex."<sup>11</sup>

In his replies to Burke's questions about the state of the economy prior to the Constitutional Convention, Bryan provided an unusually detailed assessment of the causes of the financial woes then afflicting postwar America. He eschewed simplistic explanations of America's hardships and avoided the common tendency among many Antifederalists to think about political economy in a language better suited to discussions of morality. Traditional Whig republicanism was distinctly hostile to unrestrained commercial activity and stressed the role of virtuous behavior in maintaining prosperity. Bryan avoided jeremiads about declining virtue, idleness, and luxury. In his view, the causes of America's economic woes were simple: inflated paper money, over-consumption of imported British goods, and an onerous public debt. He did not identify money and over-consumption as symptoms of moral decline. Indeed, republican laments about declining virtue were conspicuously absent from Bryan's analysis of the economic problems of the Confederation period.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the serious economic problems confronting the nation, America had not, in Bryan's estimation, succumbed to anarchy or licentiousness. Bryan disputed the claims frequently put forward by Federalists that American society was poised on the brink of collapse. Perhaps because he was so skilled a political pamphleteer, Bryan resisted the tendency so common among his peers to treat political

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Bryan to George Bryan, May, 1785, Bryan Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania). I would like to thank Joe Foster for bringing this letter to my attention and for sharing with me his own work on the Bryan family and Pennsylvania politics. Antifederalists like Elbridge Gerry were extremely wary of investing Congress with a broad grant of additional power. Gerry's concerns about the dangers of making such a grant are developed in a letter he wrote as a member of the Massachusetts delegation to the Continental Congress: see "Massachusetts Delegates to the Governor of Massachusetts," Sept. 3, 1785, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (8 vols., Washington, D.C., 1921-1936), 8:206-210; The best account of Gerry's political thought is Billias, *Elbridge Gerry*.

<sup>12</sup> A concise scholarly treatment of the traditional Whig attitude to commerce may be found in J.G.A. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (1972), 119-34. The most notable example of the Antifederalist claim that the economic woes afflicting postwar America were a result of declining republican virtue was Warren's, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, chapters 30-31.

rhetoric as an accurate depiction of reality and reminded Burke that though "Party Spirit was high" it was "much more violent on Paper than any where else." He further noted that "on the whole we were much more peaceable & orderly than our Neighbors, who read our Newspapers, believed us to be."<sup>13</sup>

Bryan did not endorse Burke's judgment that the movement for the Constitution represented a deliberate plot by British merchants, Tory sympathizers, and members of the Cincinnati. While he agreed with Burke's assessment of the principal sources of Federalist support, he did not accept Burke's analysis of the mechanisms which brought about ratification. He soundly rejected the claim that the Federalists had been involved in a systematic conspiracy and argued that:

the Evidence of a preconcerted System, in those who are called Federalists, appears rather from the Effect than from any certain knowledge before hand. The thing however must have been easy to them from their Situation in the great Towns & many of them being wealthy Men & Merchants, who have continual Correspondence with each other.<sup>14</sup>

Federalists clearly benefited from their strength in urban environments where communication was far easier. Their involvement in trade provided them with a natural network of contacts and a steady supply of information from areas outside of their localities. In choosing to describe the advantages possessed by Federalists in terms of superior resources, and thus avoiding the invocation of a conspiracy, Bryan provided a decidedly modern historical explanation for the outcome of ratification.

Bryan displayed a discerning eye for the exceedingly complex issue of political motivations. Although he favored an economic interpretation of political behavior, Bryan avoided the simplistic dichotomies that have hampered many modern historical accounts of ratification. He steadfastly refused to embrace economic determinism. Even the basic division between creditors and debtors, an issue that has figured so prominently in modern historical debate since Charles Beard, could not be resolved into a simple dichotomy. As Bryan noted, "Debtors are often Creditors in their Turn & and the Paper money had great

<sup>13</sup> See Samuel Bryan's response number 2 to questions by Aedanus Burke.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, response number 15.



Effect on Men's Minds." In choosing to distinguish between the actual state of the economy and popular perceptions, Bryan took a significant step away from earlier conspiratorial interpretations of political behavior. He recognized that the actual harm caused by economic hardship during the Confederation period was in many cases less important than the popular perception of economic instability. This distinction was a crucial one since Bryan recognized that individuals and groups often pursued a course of action under the false notion that they were acting in their best interests. Writing as the "Centinel," Bryan castigated the merchant community for precisely this reason. "The merchant, immersed in schemes of wealth, seldom extends his views beyond the immediate object of gain; he blindly pursues his seeming interest, and sees not the latent mischief."<sup>15</sup> The public arguments Bryan advanced as the "Centinel" are especially revealing when compared with his later responses to Burke's queries. Even as the "Centinel," he sought to draw a distinction between the conspiratorial actions of a small cabal of Federalist leaders and the motivations of the vast majority of Federalist supporters. As the "Centinel," Bryan provided a lengthy list of Federalist outrages that included attempts to rush the process of ratification, to intimidate Antifederalist legislators, to block Antifederalist access to the press and mails, and generally to mislead or deceive the people. Yet, despite the dirty tricks associated with the ratification campaign, Bryan felt that conspiratorial actions of the Federalist leadership only partly explained their eventual triumph in the ratification struggle.

Writing as the "Centinel," Bryan had publicly posed and answered the very same question that Burke would later address to him in private—"What gave birth to the late Continental Convention?" His answer as the "Centinel" departed little from the observations he later communicated to Burke. The solution was simple: "was it not the situation of our commerce, which lay at the mercy of every foreign power."<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, even as the "Centinel," Bryan favored an

<sup>15</sup> Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (New York, 1913). Bryan's own understanding of the economic divisions between Federalists and Antifederalists was developed in his replies to Burke: see Bryan's response to number 12. For the "Centinel's" attack on the myopia of the merchant community, see Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 2:178.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:164.

interpretation that highlighted the role of economic interest, or rather people's perceptions of their own economic interests. The "Centinel" acknowledged that an aristocratic party had been able to exploit the nation's recent economic hardships and had succeeded in convincing the population that the new Constitution would improve their economic well-being. One of reasons that the Federalists had proven so successful, the "Centinel" observed, was that "their writers . . . paint the distresses of every class of citizens with all the glowing language of eloquence." Moreover, Federalist writers managed to convince the people that the Constitution would be "a panacea for all the ills of the people." The "Centinel" did not attack the Federalists for appealing to people's interests; he only disputed the veracity of their claims. He questioned his readers, "how is the proposed government to shower down those treasures upon every class of citizen as is so industriously inculcated and so fondly believed."<sup>17</sup> Just as he had scolded merchants for their short-sighted view of their interest, so he attacked all those other groups who had been taken in by false Federalist eloquence. The "Centinel" was angry at Pennsylvanians not for pursuing their own interests but only for defining their interests too narrowly.

Rather than disparage political appeals to interest, Bryan attacked the Constitution for failing adequately to represent society's many interests. The structure of the House of Representatives was, in his view, unacceptable because it lacked sufficient representatives "to communicate the requisite information, of the wants, local circumstances and sentiments of so extensive an empire." He accepted the common Antifederalist ideal that the legislature ought to be an exact miniature of society. This notion only made sense in a society of diverse interests. While Bryan might hope for the creation of a virtuous yeomen republic at some time in the future, for the present moment he contented himself with insuring that the interests of the various classes that made up society would be properly represented. "Centinel" did not accept that legislators ought to be disinterested public servants; rather, he attacked the new frame of government for failing to represent properly the interests of the people. One of the greatest

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2:165, 163.

shortcomings of the Constitution was the "democratic branch" which was "so *independent* of the *people* as to be indifferent of its interests." Accountability, not disinterestedness, lay at the root of Bryan's conception of republicanism. The best form of government, he argued, was one "which holds those entrusted with power, in the greatest responsibility to their constituents."<sup>18</sup>

The key to understanding Bryan's political thought lay in his reformulation of traditional republican principles to accord greater legitimacy to the idea of interest. Traditional republican notions of virtue were closely tied to the ideal of disinterestedness.<sup>19</sup> English Whig thought had been based on the concept of virtual representation. Representatives in this scheme were to serve as disinterested spokesmen for the public good. This republican ideal was set against another more radical variant of Whig political thought that championed the idea of direct representation of constituent interests. American political thought struck a compromise between these two poles of Whig thought. Ideally, legislators were to be directly responsible to the people but were also charged with being disinterested representatives of the entire community. A virtuous citizenry—supporters of this doctrine argued—would naturally elect their more talented betters, members of a natural aristocracy who would serve as disinterested lawmakers.<sup>20</sup> Bryan rejected the goal of disinterestedness and carried

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 2:142, 151, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Disinterestedness played a crucial role in traditional republican thought. This theme is explored by Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 53-70. Recently Wood has argued that interest-oriented politics was crucial to Antifederalism: see Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward Carter, II, eds., *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 69-112. Bryan clearly fits Wood's most recent characterization of the Antifederalists. The assertion that Antifederalism's interest-oriented ideology was the forerunner of modern liberalism seems particularly compelling with regard to the mid-Atlantic region. Antifederalists, particularly a number of highly influential figures in Pennsylvania and New York, broke with traditional republican thought in choosing to recognize and promote a notion of representation that responded to interest. For evidence that a similar interest-oriented ideology played an influential role in shaping the thinking of New York Antifederalists, see Saul Cornell, "The Ironies of Petty Bourgeois Radicalism: The Antifederalism of Abraham Yates," Paper presented to the New-York Historical Society Conference on "New York in the Age of the Constitution," May 15-16, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> The best account of the evolution of English Whig thought into a distinctively American political ideology is Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*. Radical strains within

the idea of direct representation to its logical conclusion. Elected representatives were to be agents of their constituents and intimately familiar with their lives. This notion of representation was inherently localistic. Only by creating a legislative body large enough to include all of society's many diverse local interests could government truly be representative.

In Bryan's vision of politics, the notion of virtue had not been abandoned but was substantially altered. A virtuous citizenry, Bryan argued, would not defer to members of a natural aristocracy, but would themselves take an active interest in politics and elect individuals who represented their own interests. To foster an enlightened and active citizenry, Bryan believed that "the highest responsibility is to be attained, in a simple structure of government." He feared that "if you complicate the plan by various orders, the people will be perplexed and divided in their sentiments about the sources of abuse or misconduct." Bryan was more democratic in his thinking than many of his contemporaries because he feared the dangers posed by society's rulers more than he feared the people.<sup>21</sup>

To be sure, Bryan did not possess an unbridled faith in the people. Few Whig republican thinkers were simple majoritarian democrats. Bryan's fears about democracy are worth considering in some detail because they demonstrate the scope and limits of democratic thinking among leading Antifederalists. He particularly feared that popular deference for great men would often result in the election of leaders hostile to liberty. He was especially worried that in a nation like America, one that had only recently cast off the bonds of monarchy, too many people were still reared in patterns of deference and might democratically vote in a tyrant or an aristocracy. Bryan also worried that the Revolution had rendered the people amenable to rapid

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English Whig thought are explored in John Brewer, "English Radicalism in the Age of George III," in J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton, 1980), 323-67.

<sup>21</sup> Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 2:139. Bryan was less concerned about the dangers of a majority faction violating the rights of minority factions. He was not, however, unmindful of threats to civil liberty, and it was for this reason that he believed that a Bill of Rights was essential. He differed from Federalists like Madison because he felt that it was men who held power, not popular majorities, who were the greatest threat to civil liberties.

changes in government and hence more susceptible to the appeals of ambitious men. He was not, however, a "man of little faith" in democracy, but rather, a cautious democrat who appreciated that a truly representative government could only be attained where conditions of relative equality prevailed and the people had been reared in democratic-republican traditions. Since America had not yet attained the perfect conditions necessary for his democratic vision of republican government, he quite naturally expressed some concern about the precariousness of America's new-found freedom. His concern was typical of many democratic-minded political leaders of the Revolutionary generation who were extremely wary of the threat of counter-revolution.<sup>22</sup>

Despite his misgivings about democracy, Bryan preferred a model of government that imitated Pennsylvania's unicameral legislature. Such a system of representation would "create the most perfect responsibility" between elected officials and the people and insure that rulers would be restrained by public vigilance. By encouraging the representation of the people's interests in the most direct manner possible, the Pennsylvania model would school the people in popular democracy.<sup>23</sup> Active involvement in politics would naturally follow from individuals' pursuit of their own interests. He believed that this system would encourage a spirit of public watchfulness over elected officials. Like many democrat-minded Antifederalists, Bryan believed that greater virtue resided in the people than in any class of natural aristocrats, and he favored a form of government whose system of representation was based firmly on notions of interest and account-

<sup>22</sup> Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith," 34. I believe that Kenyon's suggestion that Bryan was less democratic than his Federalist opponents is mistaken. Leading Federalists and Antifederalists each had reservations about democracy. Although each side was committed to some form of representative government, there were important differences between the Federalist and Antifederalist understanding of democracy. If we are to comprehend these differences, we must focus on what Gordon Wood has described as the essential "political sociology" of each side: Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 485. It is vital to understand how each side thought representation would function under the Constitution. Antifederalists like Bryan felt that Federalists sought to create a system that would enshrine the principles of deference and natural aristocracy. Bryan rejected the need for popular deference to a class of virtuous natural aristocrats. In this sense, Bryan fits Wood's notion that the Antifederalists were essentially populist democrats.

<sup>23</sup> Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 2:139.

ability. His interest-oriented, localistic conception of politics was highly influential and played a vital role in shaping Antifederalist ideology in Pennsylvania. It was this theory of representation that was the Antifederalists' greatest contribution to the emergence of a liberal conception of politics.<sup>24</sup> The concepts of interest and disinterestedness marked the ideological divide that separated Bryan's brand of Antifederalism from that of his Federalist opponents—an ideological split that in large measure accounted for the competing views of representative government espoused by these two sides in the debate.

Bryan's interest-oriented conception of representation contrasted noticeably with that of James Wilson, who was among the most influential Federalist leaders in Pennsylvania and one of the most democratic-minded figures within the Federalist camp. Many modern commentators have erroneously suggested that Federalists embraced a pluralistic, interest-oriented conception of democratic politics. In fact, Federalists like Wilson worked to create a system that would manipulate interest in such a way as to neutralize its impact on the legislature. Wilson's notion of democratic politics was deeply rooted in traditional republican ideals. He sought to reconcile democracy and virtue by creating a system that would promote the election of disinterested men, and, so, would foster deference for a natural aristocracy. He hoped to prevent democratic politics from becoming

<sup>24</sup> Both Richard A. Ryerson and Douglas M. Arnold have argued that Pennsylvania Antifederalists were proponents of a homogeneous yeoman republic: see Ryerson, "Republican Theory and Partisan Reality in Revolutionary Pennsylvania: Towards a New View of the Constitutionalist Party," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Sovereign States in an Age of Uncertainty* (Charlottesville, 1981), 95-133; and Arnold, "Political Ideology and the Internal Revolution in Pennsylvania: 1776-1790" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1976). In reading Antifederalist political rhetoric it is important not to seize too quickly on those phrases and ideas which fit neatly into an abstract republican paradigm and not to treat Antifederalism as a monolithic political ideology. Each of these approaches has obscured the tensions and conflicting ideological impulses within Antifederalist thought. Antifederalists in Pennsylvania and New York displayed important proto-liberal qualities in their political thinking. Gordon Wood has found similar proto-liberal qualities in William Findley, another prominent Pennsylvania Antifederalist. For more on this point, see Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness." The literature on republicanism is voluminous. The term republican paradigm emerged as a result of Robert Shalhope's influential review article, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972), 49-80. In 1985 the *American Quarterly*, vol. 37, devoted an entire issue to the problem of republicanism in American culture and this is the best guide to recent literature on this subject.

too localistic, too rooted in the narrow and particular interests of individual communities. Fearing that a rabble rouser, a man too close to the people, might gain election, he advocated elections by large electoral districts. Wilson acknowledged the need for government to possess "the *mind or sense* of the people at large," but he also argued that it was imperative that election districts be large so as to favor "men of intelligence and uprightness." Wilson's vision of democracy looked back to a traditional republican ideal that equated disinterestedness with virtue.<sup>25</sup>

Antifederalists were not of one accord on all issues—a fact made readily apparent in comparing Aedanus Burke's understanding of ratification with that of Samuel Bryan. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the collaborative historical effort begun by these two men lay not in what the two men held in common but rather in the significant differences between how each man approached the problem of understanding politics. While both Burke and Bryan concurred in their assessment of the pertinent facts about ratification, they differed markedly in their understanding of the larger historical forces shaping political life in the new nation. Burke's emphasis on the role of conspiracy in political life reflected an older Whig conception of politics. By accepting the role of interest in political life, especially the possibility that individuals and groups could be mistaken about their own interests, Bryan was able to reduce his dependence on

<sup>25</sup> The tendency to treat Federalist thinking as a precursor to modern interest-oriented liberalism is discussed by Paul F. Bourke, "The Pluralist Reading of James Madison's Tenth *Federalist*," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975), 271-95. A number of political scientists have been especially eager to demonstrate that the Federalists were true democrats and the proper spiritual forefathers of modern democratic politics. The classic statement of this position is Martin Diamond, "Democracy and *The Federalist*: A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent," *The American Political Science Review* 53 (1959), 52-68. Ralph Rossum has gone so far as to argue that James Wilson was an advocate of a "popularly based national majoritarian democracy": Rossum, "James Wilson and the Pyramid of Government," *The Political Science Reviewer* 6 (1976), 113-42. Two useful correctives to this and other anachronistic readings of Federalist political thought include: Gordon S. Wood, "Democracy and the Constitution," in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds., *How Democratic is the Constitution?* (Washington, D.C., 1980), 1-17; Robert J. Morgan, "Madison's Theory of Representation in the Tenth *Federalist*," *Journal of Politics* 36 (1974), 852-85. Wilson's discussion of the best mechanisms for insuring the election of virtuous men appears in Adrienne Koch, ed., *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison* (Athens, Ohio, 1984), 74, 85.

conspiratorial interpretations of political behavior. Bryan approached politics in a more sophisticated fashion. He had abandoned a number of features of traditional Whig republican ideology, including the former's emphasis on conspiracy and disinterestedness. Bryan understood that the survival of republican government depended upon the creation of a system that would tap the energy of individual interests and that voters would invariably follow their own perception of their interests. Interestingly, Bryan concurred with Federalists and did not believe it was possible or desirable to eliminate interest-oriented politics. Unlike his Federalist opponents, Bryan did not wish to neutralize interest or strive to create a system that would filter out the narrow localistic attachments of elected officials. Instead, he openly embraced interest-oriented politics.

It was Bryan's Antifederalist vision of politics, not that of his Federalist opponents, that eventually came to dominate American political life. Ironically, Burke and Wilson, two men who stood on opposite sides of the ratification debate, were each in different ways wedded to traditional interpretations of republicanism. This fact should serve as a caution against attempts to treat either Federalism or Antifederalism as monolithic ideologies. Furthermore, the presence of traditional republican political ideas on both sides of the ratification debate militates against treating either Antifederalism or Federalism as the sole harbinger of modern liberalism. While Burke and Wilson each looked back to a republican vision of politics that was becoming increasingly outmoded, it would take a long time before Bryan's nascent liberal view supplanted the older republican vision of politics. That Burke and Bryan initially thought it was possible to come to a common understanding of the causes of the "late remarkable revolution in Government" is itself an excellent example of how subtle the transformation in political consciousness was that helped propel America away from republicanism towards liberalism. The move from disinterestedness to an interest-oriented conception of politics often involved slight changes in emphasis and not a wholesale rejection of earlier notions. Rather than marking a turning point between the advent of liberalism and the decline of republicanism, the Constitutional struggle was part of a long transitional phase when the rhetoric of republicanism and an emerging ideology of liberalism coexisted.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> James T. Kloppenberg has correctly sounded a cautionary note against the dangers of



## Burke's Questionnaire

### General Convention of 1787<sup>27</sup>

1. In what State and in what year was the measure proposed? What were the causes which led to the measure? by what men, or body of men or party? Or was it for the purpose of investing Congress with any additional and what powers then deemed necessary? Tell particularly.

2. What was the State of navigation, trade, and the General, and particular State police of the Union about the latter end of the year 1786? Or at that time was there in the States in general, and in any, and what particular State, what is commonly called *Anarchy*? or a spirit in the people of Licentiousness? or of enmity to their magistrates, or opposition or dislike to order and Government? Was the embarrassments of the U.S. at that period & since the peace owing to this kind of spirit? or to other & what causes? Tell particularly.

3. To what cause necessity or pretext, was it owing, that after the peace, the commerce and navigation of the U.S. was ruined? Why their credit abroad & confidence at home lost? To what cause is it to be ascribed their issuing paper money? Or what States did issue such money? The terms of redeeming it in each State, the consequence of such paper emissions—its intrinsic value.

4. Was there in 1786 or at any time before that period any

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assuming that intellectual change occurs in a simple linear fashion. In a recent essay on the origins of liberalism, Kloppenberg has provided a much needed reminder that "discourse, . . . shifts, often slowly, . . . but always unevenly, in response to the imaginative manipulation of language by creative thinkers confronting unprecedented problems." See Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History* 74 (1987), 11.

<sup>27</sup> A copy of Burke's original questions may be found in the John Nicholson Papers (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). The answers to Burke's questions are located in the Bryan Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The editors of *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Volume II, *Ratification of the Constitution by the States: Pennsylvania* (Madison, 1976), (hereafter, *DHRC*), have published Burke's original questions, Bryan's correspondence with Nicholson, and his responses to Burke's query as part of the microfiche supplement to their volume on Pennsylvania, Mfm: PA, 700a, b, c, d. The text that follows reproduces both the questions and answers and is identical to the *DHRC* transcript except that several minor typographical errors have been corrected in this edition and annotation has been provided.

influential men, or any, and what party, and in what States, whose views, interests or sentiments were unfavorable, or otherwise to the popular Govt. or favorable to a regal one? Or if so from what motives? Or was there any party and who were they inclined to avail themselves of the popularity of a certain *personage* [General George Washington?] to bring about any, and what revolution in the Government?

5. When the different States appointed delegates to the Convention, what was the general opinion of the people of Pennsylvania or its neighbouring States concerning the powers & duty which those delegates were about to execute? Or was it in contemplation of the people, or of any and what part that the republican system of Govt. should be overturned, or materially altered? What was the opinion of the people, their attachment, or dislike to the Confederation? If it was deemed practicable were it amended by conferring more authority in affairs relating to commerce? or what other affairs?

6. What is your opinion, whether confederate Republics can manage the affairs of the Confederacy, in the mode of the old Confederation; or by putting the powers of the Confederacy into high departments, & parcelling it out after the form of a regal Govt. as at present?

7. What are the special words of the act of Pennsylvania & neighbouring States, by which authority is given to their respective delegates for the Convention?

8. At what time did the General Convention meet, & in what part of Philadelphia? And in what manner public or private, was the business or debates conducted? Or if the Convention was split into any and what parties? Or if a certain personage took any and what active part, in framing the system? The history and proceedings of this Convention is particularly requested.

9. Did the Cincinnati meet at the time the Convention sat or not? What part was taken by that Society then or afterwards.

10. What were the public opinion & expectations of the Convention's proceedings while they sat? Or did the public or any party, expect any system of govt. like that which was offered, or not?

11. When the new system the result of their deliberations, was offered to the Public, what was the effect produced on the minds of the public upon the subject? Or did the people split into any and what faction or party in consequence.

12. What part or side was taken by the following classes of citizens of Pennsylvania & elsewhere vizt.

Cincinnati	Mechanics	} Inhabitants
Civil Officers	Seafaring men	
Monied men	Creditors	
Merchants	Debtors	
Lawyers	Middle Country	
Divines	Sea Coast	
Men of Letters	Back Country	
Whigs	Foreigners—	
Tories		
Women		

Which of all these were instrumental, and to what extent, and from what views or motives for or against the system?

13. What was then temper & disposition of the two parties against each other? What party names—or if any beside federalist and Antifedl.? Who invented the latter names? What effect had it?

14. Among those who were in opposition to the new-system, was there any preconcert, correspondence or mutual understanding to act with unanimity? Or if not thro' what cause was it neglected or omitted?

15. Among the federalists was there any such preconcert, or system of mutual aid, in any and what States, and what men or party combined to adopt the New Constitution? And what was the nature of such combination?

16. Was there any attempt and what to prevent an investigation of its merits? Or was there sufficient given for that purpose? or take the opinion of the people on it? or any attempt made by the anti-federalists to gain time & for what purpose, or to prevent publications on the subject?

17. Or did the federalists use any and what means to prevent any such publications from going forth? or to intercept letters or communications. What use was made of the Post-Office, and by whose means or agency was it done?

18. What were the principal publications for and against the New-System? Who the reputed authors?

19. How soon after the system was offered to the public that the Legislatures and States of Pennsylvania, Jersey, Delaware &c. took it up, and passed it—the history of this business in Pennsylvania.

20. If any arts used to accelerate its adoption? or to elect, or reject for State Convention, such as were friendly, or otherwise to the system? When Convention met, what the temper of the parties? In discussing the system, whether violent, insolent, or otherwise?

21. Who were the leading and influential men in Pennsylvania in favor of it? Their names? Who in Jersey? Who in Delaware and Maryland? Their views and character.

22. In those States who were the Leading and influential Anti-federalists? and from what parts of the States?

23. In State Convention of Pennsylvania or Legislature, was there a secession of some of the members? How many and for what cause? Were they not made prisoners and forced back again to form a house? by whom and in what manner—the history of this business—

Was the Constitution adopted in Pennsylvania in consequence of such force put on the seceding members? Was it resented by the public? If not why? How palliated or justified by the federalists? Conduct of minority after adoption? Their protest or address how received by their constituents?

24. Through this whole business, what was the spirit of the populace of the City, or low Country? or were the Anti's in any fear or danger of writing or speaking against the Constitution? Or was there any Mob to crush or punish opposition or was it practicable to raise a mob—the history of this business.

[25 missing]<sup>28</sup>

26. If any and what arts used by the federalists to mislead or deceive the people to adopt it? or to suppress the publications or objections of the other party?

27. If any rumours, or false reports spread to defame, or ascribe any and what improper motives to the opposition of the Anti's—what were the arts used?

28. If any and what impediments in the Printing offices—the conduct and character of the Printers in general in this business? Were there any Printers and who & where, who opposed the Constitution? Or were Printers under any and what fear or restraint to

<sup>28</sup> Question twenty-five was omitted from the manuscript copy Bryan forwarded to John Nicholson.

publish against the New-System? Or did the Printers act independently or otherwise?

29. How far was the Press instrumental in bringing about the Revolution in Govt.? Or could this be brought about without availing themselves as they did of the partiality of the Printers?

30. Were any Printers, and who abused, or oppressed or had subscriptions withdrawn for publishing against the system? The treatment to Coll. Oswald, Greenleaf and what other Printers?<sup>29</sup>

### Samuel Bryan to Aedanus Burke, Post 5 December 1789

1. Previous to the appointment of the Convention there seemed to be in Pennsylvania a general Wish for a more efficient Confederation. The public Debt was unpaid & unfunded. We were deluged with foreign Goods, which it was evident might have paid large Sums to the Continental Treasury, if Duties could have been generally laid & collected, & at the same Time the levying such Duties would have checked the extravagant Consumption. Whilst Congress could only recommend Measures & the States individually could refuse to execute them it was obvious that we were in Danger of falling to Pieces. The opposition of Rhode Island to the five per Cent had made a deep Impression upon Peoples Minds. A Desire of strengthening the Hands of Congress was very general; but no particular Scheme seemed to be digested, except that most Men seemed to wish Congress possessed of Power to levy Duties on imported Goods. At this Time the Convention was proposed & Members were elected for Pennsylvania about the Beginning of the Year 1787;—I do not remember the particular Time. Very little Bustle was made & little or no Opposition. What has been called the anticonstitutional or Aristocratic Party<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Eleazer Oswald published the *Independent Gazetteer*, a leading Antifederalist newspaper in Philadelphia. Thomas Greenleaf was the publisher of the *New York Journal*, an important Antifederalist newspaper in New York City.

<sup>30</sup> The Anti-Constitutional party, or Republican party, opposed the Pennsylvania state Constitution of 1776. The leaders of this party provided the core for the leadership of the Federalists during the ratification struggle in Pennsylvania. The Constitutionalists, supporters of the state Constitution of 1776, formed the basic core of Antifederalist support. The standard work on Pennsylvania politics in the period remains Robert L. Brunhouse, *The*

then governed our Councils and the Representatives in Convention were chosen almost wholly of that Party & entirely from the City of Philadelphia. The Convention met without much Expectation of any thing very important being done by them till towards the Close, altho some Intimations were made, before hand, by some foolish Members (as they were thought) of the Society of Cincinnatus that Nothing less than a Monarchy was to be erected & that the people of Massachusetts were driven into Rebellion for the very purpose of smoothing the Way to this Step by their Suppression. Little Regard however was paid to these Speeches till towards the Close of the Session of the Convention, when Surmises were spread from other Quarters that Something injurious to the Liberties of the People was about to be produced. These Surmises were again contradicted in some Degree;—and the Convention rose with favourable Prospects.

2. I am not able to give a particular State of Trade in Pennsylvania in 1786. But in General it was in a very unfavourable Situation. Our Navigation was almost wholly in the Hands of Foreigners, chiefly English; and a great Part of the Negotiation & Sale of Merchandize was in the same hands. The numerous Classes of Tradesmen who depend on Commerce & particularly those who depend on Navigation were distressed. There was no Anarchy nor any considerable Degree of Licentiousness in Pennsylvania. Party Spirit was high; but much more violent on Paper than any where else. The Tories, with the Spirit of Chagrin & Resentment which flowed from their Disappointments & what they called persecution (chiefly arising from the Test law)<sup>31</sup> had taken Side with the Anticonstitutional or aristocratic party in Opposition to the Constitutionals who had before held the Reins of Government. But on the whole we were much more peaceable & orderly than our Neighbours, who read our Newspapers, believed us

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*Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Harrisburg, 1942). For more recent work on political life in Pennsylvania, see Ryerson, "Republican Theory and Partisan Reality in Revolutionary Pennsylvania"; Arnold, "Political Ideology and the Internal Revolution in Pennsylvania"; and Owen S. Ireland, "Partisanship and the Constitution: Pennsylvania, 1787," *Pennsylvania History* 45 (1978), 315-32.

<sup>31</sup> The Test Law required an oath of allegiance to the state of Pennsylvania. The law was vigorously attacked by the Republicans and a number of religious groups who were opposed to oath taking of any kind. For discussions of the significance of the test laws, see Arnold, "Political Ideology and the Internal Revolution in Pennsylvania," 105-8.

to be. And Pennsylvania, all along, besides supporting her own Government, had given the most effectual Aid to the United States, particularly in Money.

3. The Ruin of the Commerce & Navigation of the United States was owing to a Concurrence of Causes. Some of the Northern Fisheries had been long nourished by Bounties from Great Britain before the War; and those Bounties were now withdrawn. We had a Deluge of Money at the Close of the War, which raised the Prices of our own Commodities at home and the vast Diminution of Industry increased this Mischief. Trade during the War had fallen into the Hands of successful, but ignorant, adventurers who did not understand Commerce. The English Manufacturers, at the End of the War, were vastly overloaded with those kinds of Goods, which were calculated only for the American Markets, and they crowded them upon us by the Hand of their own Clerks & Agents, in such immense Quantities, that it was impossible for us ever to pay for them. These Goods were either sold for small prices or trusted out without Discretion & never paid for. But the Exclusion of our Ships from so many of the British & French Ports & the Want of Mediterranean Passes have contributed to the Destruction of our Navigation more than all other Causes.

As to the Paper Money of Pennsylvania which has been issued since the War, it was made in 1785 for the purpose of establishing Funds for payment of the Interest to public Creditors & to lend to such as were under the Necessity of borrowing, at a Time when there were very few private Lenders. I am not well acquainted with the Detail of its Funds, Quantities & Times of Redemption. It has too much fluctuated in its Credit & has been as low as  $33 \frac{1}{3}$  p Cent Discount. In Jersey the same Motives for issuing Paper money prevailed & its Fate had been similar. I understand it is now at two third of its nominal Value.

4. When the federal Constitution was proposed to the people, the Desire of increasing the powers of Congress was great & this Object had a mighty Influence in its Favor. The popularity of Genl. W. & Doctor Franklin had still more. The people in the Towns who depended, in any Measure, on Trade, expected great Relief from it. The Gentlemen of the late Army, & the Tools of Aristocracy were loud in its Support;—and as the chief Opposition to it was believed to arise from such as belonged to the Constitutional Party, the whole Body of the old Tories, a numerous & wealthy Sett of Men, joined

in its Support. There is too much Reason to believe that some Men among us had deeper Views than they chose to declare & wished a Government even less popular than the one proposed; but in Pennsylvania they have been very reserved on this Head. The Opposition was very powerful & their Language was for adopting the Constitution & procuring Amendments afterwards.

5. I have anticipated this Question.

6. The Writer of this had confined his Views of Alteration to be made in the old Confederation to a mere Enlargement of the Powers of Congress, particularly as to maritime Affairs. He thinks the Experiment ought at least to have been tried, whether we could not have succeeded under a Confederation of independent States, before we proceeded to consolidate all power in one general Government.

7. Copies of the Acts of Assembly, which are public, will furnish the best Answer to this Question.

8. The Convention sat in the State house & debated in private. It has nevertheless been said &, I suppose, is beyond a Doubt that the Members were much divided & that the present Form of Constitution was agreed to as a Compromise, when they had almost despaired of agreeing upon any one.

9. The Cincinnati met shortly before the Convention. Some speeches of Individuals in private Companies were reported to the Effect before mentioned.<sup>32</sup>

10. This is anticipated.

11. When the System was published some Writers in the Newspapers stated many Objections to it. The Party in opposition were the old Constitutional Whiggs for the most part. Numbers of these however &, especially in the Towns, joined in supporting the new federal Constitution.

12. The Cincinnati were in Support of it.

The Civil officers were threatened in News paper publications, if they should oppose, & were mostly in favor it.

<sup>32</sup> A general meeting of the Society that included several delegates who later attended the Constitutional Convention occurred on May 7, 1787. Further details on the activities of the Cincinnati may be found in Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy*, 95.



Monied Men & particularly the Stockholders in the Bank were in favor of it.<sup>33</sup>

The Merchants in favor of it.

Lawyers;—the greatest part in favor of it.

Divines of all Denominations, with very few Exceptions, in favor of it. They had suffered by Paper Money.

Men of Letters, many of them, were opposed to it.<sup>34</sup>

Whigs;—the Majority of them opposed to it.

Tories;—almost all for it.

The Women;—all admire Genl. W.<sup>35</sup>

Mechanics;—such as depend on Commerce & Navigation in favor. The others divided according to their former Attachments to the Revolution & Constitution of Pennsylvania or their Prejudices against them.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The Bank of North America was chartered by the Continental Congress in 1781. Members of the Constitutional party opposed the bank and attacked it as an unfair monopoly. On the Bank controversy, see Janet Wilson, "The Bank of North America and Pennsylvania Politics: 1781-1787," *PMHB* 66 (1942), 3-28.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Bryan's claim with that of "A Freeman," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 7, 1787, who noted that a prominent literary institution in Philadelphia was presided over by a man "well known for his Antifederal disposition." The literary institution alluded to was the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) and the man presiding over it was Provost John Ewing. In addition to Ewing, mathematics instructor Benjamin Workman wrote the essays of "Philadelphensis," an important Antifederalist series attacking the Constitution. James Hutchinson, one of the authors of "An Old Whig," was also associated with the college. Francis Hopkinson charged that the college was a "hot-bed of sedition." See his essay under the signature "A.B." in the *Independent Gazetteer*, March 11, 1788. Bryan also might have been thinking of the poet Peter Markoe, a leading literary figure in the city and a noted Antifederalist supporter.

<sup>35</sup> Antifederalists complained about Federalist appeals to the prestige of men like Franklin and Washington. To combat these appeals to deference, Antifederalists praised the manly values of independence. An explicit invocation of this idea may be found in "Algernon Sidney," *Independent Gazetteer*, Nov. 21, 1787. For a sarcastic Antifederalist attack on the Federalists that explicitly links deference with female traits, see "Minutes of the Spinsters' Society," *Pennsylvania Herald*, Nov. 3, 1787.

<sup>36</sup> Philadelphia artisans traditionally had been allied with backcountry Constitutionalists. This coalition weakened during the 1780s and finally disintegrated when urban artisans cast their lot with Federalists. Interestingly, Bryan's observations suggest that there may have been some divisions within the artisan community over the issue of the Constitution. Most studies of artisan political thought in this period have chosen to treat artisan republicanism as a monolithic political ideology. Bryan's comment is a useful reminder of the political diversity within the artisan community. The best published accounts of Philadelphia's artisan

Seafaring Men followed the Mercantile Interest & were strenuous in favor of it.

Creditors were influenced in favor of it by their Aversion to Paper money;—yet some were opposed to it.

Debtors are often Creditors in their Turn & the Paper money had great Effect on Men's Minds. The Public Creditors were much divided, according to their former Predilections & Attachments.

The Counties nearest the Navigation were in favor of it generally;—those more remote in Opposition. The Farmers were perhaps more numerous in Opposition than any other Sett of Men. Most Townsmen were for it.

The Foreigners were chiefly connected with the Mercantile people & were in favor of it. Even the foreign Seamen were made useful to the Support of it in Philadelphia.

13. The Party Names, before the Convention sat, were Whigs & Tories, which Names were wearing out;—and Constitutionalist & those who called themselves Republicans & who were also called Aristocratics & Anticonstitutionalists. In this last class were included most of the Merchants, most of the monied Men, most of the Gentlemen in the late Army & many of the Mob in the Towns.

The Name of Federalists or Federal Men grew up at New York & in the Eastern States, some Time before the Calling of the Convention, to denominate such as were attached to the general Support of the United States, in Opposition to those who preferred local & particular Advantages, such as those who opposed the five per Cent Duty or who with held their Quotas of Contribution to the general Treasury of the United States. This Name was taken possession of by those who were in favor of the new federal Government as they called it & the opposers were called Antifederalists.

14. Those in Opposition seem to have had no Preconcert, nor any Suspicion of what was coming forward. The same Objections were made in different Parts of the Continent, almost at the same Time, merely as they were obviously dictated by the Subject. Local Ideas seem to have entered very little into the Objections.

15. The Evidence of a preconcerted System, in those who are called Federalists, appears rather from the Effect than from any certain

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community in this period are: Charles S. Olton, *Artisans for Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution* (Syracuse, 1975); and Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976).

Knowledge before hand. The thing however must have been easy to them from their Situation in the great Towns & many of them being wealthy Men & Merchants, who have continual Correspondence with each other.

16. The Printers were certainly most of them more willing to publish for, then against the new Constitution. They depended more upon the People in the Towns than in the Country. The Towns people withdrew their Subscriptions from those who printed Papers against, and violent Threats were thrown out against the Antis & Attempts were made to injure them in their Business.

17. Letters were frequently intercepted, & some of them selected & published by the Federalists. Private Conversation was listened to by Eves-droppers. Pamphlets & Newspapers were stopt & destroyed. This was the more easily done as most of the Towns, even down to the smallest villages, were in possession of the Federalists. I can say Nothing about the Post Office.

18. The Writer of this has very imperfect Knowledge on this Subject.

19. In Pennsylvania the Business of the Ratification was extremely hurried. The Assembly voted, if I remember right, to call a Convention for its Ratification before they were officially notified of its being recommended by Congress; and the Election was hurried through before it was generally known what was doing. Many even in the Counties not very remote were totally uninformed of any Election being intended before it was finished[.] I have not Materials to be more particular.

20. In the State Convention the Behavior of the Federalists was highly insolent & contemptuous. Out of Doors, even in Philadelphia, their Behavior was more moderate after the Election for Members of Congress than before. The Election had discovered a Degree of Strength in the Antis which they did not expect & which Nothing but Surprize & the Accident of extreme bad Weather which was unfavorable to the collecting of people scattered thro the Country could have got the better of. There was one Instance of Violence a short Time before which was not generally countenanced.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> While Federalists scored an impressive victory in the elections for the state ratifying convention, Antifederalists were successful at electing a number of their most vocal spokesmen to the convention. On election night a Federalist mob attacked the home of leading Philadelphia Antifederalists and the boarding house where western Antifederalists were residing. For more details on these events, see *DHRC*, 224-44.

21. I have not Time to enumerate the Persons w[ho] were active in supporting the Measures.

22. Nor of those against.

23. There was a Secession from the Legislature for the Purpose of preventing Measures from being precipitated. Some of those seceding were made prisoners insulted & dragged back, by the Sergeant at Arms & a Mob of Assistants.<sup>38</sup>

24. The publications of the Day will be the best Answer to this Question.

25. The Minds of People in Philadelphia were highly inflamed against the Opposers & some of them were unquestionably over awed;—some of them injured. Nothing perhaps checked this Spirit of Outrage so much as similar Instances in Cumberland County & Huntingdon County & others & a Discovery of the real Strength of Opposition.<sup>39</sup>

26. The usual Arts of Party were used, besides those which have been enumerated.

27. The Adoption of the Constitution by North Carolina was frequently asserted & published in pretended Letters. Other Letters were fabricated & published; but they have slipt my Memory.

28. In General it may be said that Col. Oswald was almost the only Printer who published in Opposition in Philadelphia & that he has been injured in Consequence. I cannot be more particular.

29. The printing presses were notoriously the great Instruments of the American Revolution.<sup>40</sup>

30. I cannot be very particular on this head.

*University of Pennsylvania*

SAUL CORNELL

<sup>38</sup> Western members of the Pennsylvania Assembly sought to prevent a vote on calling a state ratifying convention by absenting themselves from the State House and preventing a quorum. Several of the seceding members of the Assembly were dragged into the State House by a Federalist mob in Philadelphia. By forcing the assemblymen into the House a quorum was achieved and the vote to call a state ratifying convention passed. These events can be pieced together from *DHRC*, 95-106.

<sup>39</sup> Antifederalist rioting in Cumberland and Huntingdon Counties, Bryan believed, acted as a deterrent to further Federalist mob activity in Philadelphia. For details on these incidents, see *DHRC*, 670-718.

<sup>40</sup> "The late remarkable revolution in government," i.e., ratification of the federal Constitution.