



An *Impartial* Address to the Citizens of the City and County of Albany: Or
The 35 Anti-Federal OBJECTIONS REFUTED.

By the Federal Committee of the City of Albany [New York], April 1788, selections

___with selections from broadsides of the Albany Anti-Federalist Committee___

On the 26th of July, 1788, New York became the eleventh state to ratify the Constitution in a close 30-27 vote achieved only by the Federalists' agreement to promote a bill of rights in the first Congress. During the preceding spring as delegates were elected to the state ratifying convention, local Federalist and anti-Federalist committees conducted wars of words in newspapers, pamphlets, and one-page broadsides—expounding and refuting in quickly published pieces, the eighteenth-century equivalent of blogging. And as occurs in the blogosphere, the tone was often less civil than the expository and detached voice of political theorists who wrote the Federalist Papers—James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay—and the works collectively known as the Anti-Federalist Papers by George Mason, George Clinton, Mercy Otis Warren, and others. Here we sample the lively paper debate in Albany, New York, centering on a Q&A-style pamphlet published by the Albany Federal Committee to refute arguments in a newspaper essay published a few days earlier by the city's Anti-Federal Committee (and later distributed as a broadside). To discern the variety of tone in the pieces—formal or conversational, derisive or congenial—read the pieces aloud. Follow the blend of "impartial" and impassioned rhetoric. How did these pieces function as instruction and persuasion?

We have lately seen, with no small degree of surprise, a publication intended to be dealt out in a private underhanded way by designing [deceitful] persons a few days previous to the Election [of delegates to the state ratifying convention], with a view to prejudice the ignorant and uninformed citizen against the true interest of his country, and at so critical a time that his prejudices might not be removed before he had given his final vote to condemn the new Government: but its having been accidentally exposed has caused it to be circulated earlier than was intended. — We shall just observe that it contains not only a variety of the most palpable improprieties [misrepresentations] but also a number of sentiments which, if admitted, must strike at the root of all government whatever and leave us nearly in a state of nature.¹ — We well know that the gentlemen who style themselves "Anti-Federalists" are in direct opposition to the Union of the States; but we cannot help expressing a great degree of pain on

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¹ State of nature: i.e., a state of anarchy; without government or civilized society.

seeing them condescend [lower themselves] to such low and designing arts on a subject so sacred as that of the establishing a Constitution for three millions of their countrymen. — The Federalists have, at their own expense, circulated many thousand copies of the New Constitution, in three languages,² with no other view than that every man may judge for himself. — The Anti-Federalists present publications which express their private prejudices only, without pretending to offer a better system for the government of our country — Had their thirty-five objections been founded on truth and reason, ought they not to have circulated them publicly and defied us to contradict them? — instead of which they have attempted to impose them upon the public at so late a period as, in some measure, to preclude the opportunity of obviating [countering] in time the false prejudices they might occasion [cause]. — We shall take them up and state replies to each.³

OBJECTION. *That the Convention who were appointed to revise the old Constitution have made a new one.*⁴

ANSWER. Whether the proposed Constitution be entirely new or only amended is of very little consequence at present, as the Convention do not undertake to establish it, but send it to us for examination. If we think it good we can accept of it; if we do not approve of it, we can reject it. But the old Confederation of the States, be it good or bad, was adopted and confirmed without being submitted to the great body of the people for their approbation [approval].⁵

Anti-Federalists: “[The Federalists] have asserted that the present [Articles of] Confederation are defective and tend to anarchy and confusion. . . . It is the weakest of all weak reasons to adopt a bad Constitution because the present one is defective. A person of a sickly [body] might as well put an end to his existence for fear that his sickness or infirmity would be the cause of his death.”⁵

OBJECTION. *That it is not a federal but a consolidated government, repugnant to the principles of a republican government⁷ and destructive of the state governments.*

ANSWER. It is consolidated only as to national purposes, and is founded on pure republican principles — deriving all powers from the people, the only criterion of a republican government. It expressly guarantees the same kind of government to each state in the Union; and if the state governments are destroyed, the Continental system must fall — as the several state legislatures have the sole power of appointing senators and of directing the manner of appointing electors to choose the President.

OBJECTION. *Nine states ratifying the new Government, it is to be binding on the states so ratifying, which will dissolve the old confederation.*⁸

ANSWER. States in an empire are so far like individuals in a state that the majority must govern. The voice of three fourths of the states are here made necessary — A strong proof of the republican spirit of the New System — But the remaining states may continue independent if they please, though policy must dictate all of them eventually to join the Union.

OBJECTION. *The great powers of the New Government over the lives and property of the citizens.*

ANSWER. This objection is an address to the passions and not an appeal to reason, and is aimed at no particular part of the proposed system; of course, it cannot receive a direct answer. — The powers in the New Government are well balanced with each other and properly checked.

² English, German, and Dutch.

³ Note is made if the Federalist wording of an Anti-Federalist objection is substantially different from that in the Anti-Federalist broadside.

⁴ Wording in the Anti-Federalist broadside: “The Convention who were appointed for the sole and express purpose of revising and amending the [Articles of] Confederation have taken upon themselves the power of making a new one.”

⁵ Due to the necessity of having a wartime government, the Articles of Confederation were implemented by the Continental Congress in 1777 soon after being submitted to the states for ratification, a process that was not complete until March 1781, just nine months before the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

⁶ Albany Anti-Federal Committee, untitled broadside, 10 April 1788 [Early American Imprints #45215].

⁷ I.e., a government elected by the people; not referring to the Republican Party founded later.

⁸ Anti-Federalist objection continues: “A clause dictated by the same genius of Aristocracy which prompted the Convention to enjoin secrecy on their members, to keep their doors shut, their journals locked up, and none of the members to take any extracts.”

OBJECTION. *These powers not defined, and may be interpreted to arbitrary purposes.*

ANSWER. This objection will stand equally good against the government of this state and all other republican forms whatever, as it tends to destroy that degree of confidence in our rulers, without which no government but an absolute monarchy can exist.

OBJECTION. *Their laws to be the supreme laws of the land — Called a sweeping clause, that subjects everything to the control of the New Government.*⁹

ANSWER. The words “made in pursuance of the Constitution,” which are fully expressed in the form of government submitted to us, are willfully omitted by the objectors to deceive the people into a belief that the New System of Government will have power to make laws in all cases whatsoever; whereas they very well know that the New Government can make such laws only as will respect the United States: and should they not have this power, the small state of Rhode Island might, on every occasion, obstruct the most important national measures.¹¹

OBJECTION. *The small number of members who are to compose the National Legislature and to pass laws to govern the Continent.*¹²

ANSWER. The new Congress will consist of upwards of ninety members. The present Congress who are, by the Articles of Confederation, vested with powers in many cases equally extensive, can legally transact the most important concerns of the nation with only eighteen members, which under the New Government must require at least forty-six — a great acquisition on the part of the people. Their laws will only respect Continental matters: the administration of justice between citizens of the same state must and will remain the same as at present.

OBJECTION. *The members of the Senate are to be chosen by the Legislatures and not by the people. This will make them act like masters and not servants.*¹³

ANSWER. The members of the present Congress are chosen in the same way, and they never yet have been

**To the Citizens of the City
and County of Albany**

ALBANY ANTI-FEDERAL COMMITTEE
undated broadside (March or April 1788)⁹
EXCERPTS

The Federal Committee, as a body, published some abusive, false and injurious imputations on those who were against adopting the new Constitution with amendments.—They have, as a body, countenanced unprovoked and undeserved attacks on individuals who are opposed to the New Constitution.—This is not mere assertion: the proofs are in our power, and some of them rest in the recollection of almost every man who has read the *newspapers* printed in this county.

We will relate in a few words a matter which it is necessary on this occasion the public should be acquainted with, as it explains the management of the Federalists.—When the New Constitution became a particular object of inquiry, several publications, *personal in their nature and confessedly false as to their subject* were successively given to the public to hurt the feelings and injure the characters [of] several persons who, it was supposed, would oppose the adoption of the New Constitution—This was often complained of without effect—At last the nomination of the Federal Committee made its appearance, with remarks, announcing to the public the characters who were excluded from the list of Candidates [to the state ratifying convention].

Let every impartial man review the Federal publications before that period, and he will observe them filled with the most venomous invectives against the Anti-Federalists, collectively and individually; all which was silently submitted to, till the Federal Committee showed that they meant to pursue the same line of conduct—Then, and not till then, were THEIR INQUITIES VISITED ON THEIR OWN HEADS—they felt lore [lost]—a compromise took place, and it was agreed that all personalities should cease. They did so for a considerable time.

⁹ Art. 6, U.S. Constitution: “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; . . .”

¹⁰ Early American Imprints #45221.

¹¹ As it had done several times under the Articles of Confederation.

¹² Wording in the Anti-Federalist broadside: “The small number of members who are to compose the General Legislature, which is to pass laws to govern so large and extensive a Continent, inhabited by people of different laws, customs, and opinions, and [most of them residing upwards of 400 miles from the seat of government [capital].

¹³ The 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified 1913) provides for the direct election of Senators by citizens instead of state legislatures.

charged with acting as masters or betrayers of their country. The Chancellor, Judges of the Supreme Court, and other great officers of our state [New York] are chosen by the Council of Appointment, who are a remove from our Legislature, and generally make their appointments by only three persons; yet these wise observers will not pretend to say that our state officers have ever acted corruptly. — However, under the New System, the rights of the people will be perfectly well secured, as no law can be made by the Senate unless their Representatives agree to it.

OBJECTION. That slaves are computed in apportioning Representatives.

ANSWER. Agreeable to the New System, taxation and representation must go together. These objectors should have been so candid as to add that all direct taxes must be laid on each state in proportion to the number of its inhabitants; that by this computation five slaves will pay taxes equal to three free men, which will be a great advantage to New York and the eastern states who have very few slaves.¹⁴

OBJECTION. The power to regulate the times and places of holding elections.¹⁵

ANSWER. Every Government must have the power of supporting its existence within itself or it can have no stability. Consequently, if the General Government cannot direct individuals of each state to elect their Representatives for Congress, on their state's neglecting or omitting to do it, it would be in the power of any little state to destroy the General System and bring confusion into the Government by neglecting to pass election laws. The Convention of Massachusetts have recommended an explanation of this clause, and we wish our Convention to do the same.

OBJECTION. The power to lay poll taxes, duties, imposts and other taxes.

ANSWER. All Governments must have the right of taxation, which power, including that of laying a poll tax, is now vested in our state Government; but we have every security that reasonable beings can possibly ask [that] by the Constitution no tax or revenue law can be passed in Congress but what must originate or have its beginning in the lower House, who are elected by the people at large. A poll tax has never been laid by this state nor by any of the southern states, and we have every reason to believe never will, as by the Constitution five slaves must pay as large a poll tax as three white men; and, consequently the southern states must ever be opposed to poll taxes. The principal and only sure dependence for the New Government must be the impost or duty on trade, which will be paid by the merchant who imports foreign merchandise, and the wealthy citizen, and will be scarcely felt by the poor inhabitants of the country.

OBJECTION. The power to appoint continental [federal] officers to collect those taxes.

ANSWER. Whatever revenues are granted to Congress for our national benefit must be collected by persons who are amenable [answerable] to Congress for their conduct — should not this privilege be granted to the General Government, it would remain, in a very essential point, in the same situation it is at present. It is a sufficient security for the people at large that, should Congress make improper appointments or laws on this or any other occasion, it must disgust the state so injured and of course tend to the dissolution and destruction of the United Government.

OBJECTION. That the net produce of all duties on imports and exports laid by the several states shall be for the benefit of the United States.

¹⁴ I.e., that the three-fifths compromise will result in slave states would pay more taxes per (white) person than nonslave states.

¹⁵ Wording in the Anti-Federalist broadside: "The power to alter and regulate the time, place, and manner of holding elections so as to keep them subjected to their influence."

ANSWER. That Congress should have the benefit of the impost [tax] on all foreign goods imported into the United States, no one can object to who wishes for a Union of the States and has a sufficient share of common honesty to admit that we ought to attempt to repay France and Holland the monies lent us in the court of the late [recent] war, and who would wish for the Government of our Country to have the means of protecting and defending us from all foreign foes and invaders; — for all must know that the impost on trade is the only solid dependence the United States can have for raising a revenue for our general benefit.

OBJECTION *That none of the states can coin money or emit bills of credit* [print paper money].

ANSWER. The emitting of a paper currency by the different states has occasioned [caused] many difficulties and much confusion between their citizens, as the funds on which it has been emitted have been more or less adequate to its redemption.¹⁶ In many of the states . . . it has opened a door to fraud, villainy and discord — in Rhode Island it is at present a lawful tender [legal money], though going at twelve for one — in Pennsylvania and Jersey it is also going at a very large discount — in this state, although its credit has been tolerably well supported, so much has been counterfeited that many poor men have been thereby greatly injured and distressed. It is therefore, high time that the wicked and fraudu-lent system of paper money be checked in order that those who have gold and silver laying by them [in their ownership] may be induced to bring it into circulation without the fear of having a depreciated, counterfeit paper tendered in its stead [used as money in its place].

OBJECTION. *The power of supporting a standing army in time of peace.*¹⁷

ANSWER. The words “time of peace” are not in the Constitution but are made use of on this occasion as a scarecrow to frighten people. The authority must be vested in every Government to raise troops to defend the country, and this power must be discretionary, to be used by the Government whenever it may be necessary; and when it can only be used by our immediate Representatives, it can be attended with no possible danger — our present Congress, not only have this power but have actually several hundred men in pay on the back parts of Virginia and elsewhere. Our frontiers must be garrisoned in time of peace, and should Congress not have power to hire men to do this duty, the militia must be dragged from their families for the purpose.

OBJECTION. *The power to call forth the militia to any part of the Continent* [country] *without limitation as to time or place.*

ANSWER. What would have been the fate of our state in the late war had not Congress called forth the militia of other states to defend us? And was it not through the assistance of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, that [British General] Burgoyne with his army were captured? As our situation makes us a frontier to four or five states, we do not know how soon we may stand in need of assistance against savage and other enemies, though in all probability those states may never stand in need of assistance from us.

OBJECTION. *Men conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms made liable to perform military duty.*¹⁸

ANSWER. Those citizens who have conscientious objections against bearing arms have ever been carefully attended to by the laws of their country, and there can be no doubt whatever but the same generous attention will be paid to them by the laws of the New Government.

OBJECTION. *The power of the New Government to establish the salaries for their own services.*

¹⁶ During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress and the states printed vast amounts of paper money to maintain the war effort—in part due to Congress’s lack of authority to levy taxes and raise money—leading to massive inflation, postwar depression, high debt, and widespread distrust of the printed money’s value for business and commerce.

¹⁷ The Anti-Federalist objection continues: “The bane of a republican government—by a standing army most of the once free nations of the globe have been reduced to bondage and by this Britain attempted to enforce her arbitrary measures.”

¹⁸ I.e., men who morally object to using firearms against people—such as Quakers and other pacifists—required to serve in the army, navy, etc.

ANSWER. Is not this the case with our own and all the other state governments, and with every government in existence? And what superior power can possibly exist in a government that can regulate the salaries of persons who hold the governing powers?

OBJECTION. *The power of payment of the salaries of judges, which cannot be diminished.*

ANSWER. To enable judges to be just, they must be independent. This principle has wisely induced the framers of the Constitution to put the judges in office during good behavior, and to put it out of the power of government to lower their salaries, lest it might deter them from doing their duty with firmness against men in power.

OBJECTION. *The power relating to the migration or importation of foreigners.*

ANSWER. It is well known that this clause principally reflects the importation of slaves into any of the United States. It is probable the eastern states in Convention wished to prohibit this infamous traffic immediately but that the southern states retained the privilege of importing slaves till the year 1808; but admitted of [allowed] a tax or duty of ten dollars upon each, which is expressly mentioned to be on *such importation* and consequently alludes to slaves, as the word migration can only allude to freemen coming into our country.

OBJECTION. *The not securing the rights of conscience in religious matters.*

ANSWER. How weak and idle is this observation? No powers that can interfere with the rights of conscience are to be given to the New Government; consequently they can make no laws that will interfere with those rights. And shall we not then be contented with the retaining the privilege of worshipping our Maker according to the free and uncontrolled dictates of our own consciences — or would we wish to have one sect of religion established over all others, this has been done by all the nations of Europe and has caused more bloodshed than even the wicked ambition of princes.

OBJECTIONS 22, 23, and 24. *The vast power vested in one man, not elected by the people, who has power equal to many European kings, and who, though elected for four years, may be again elected and continued for life.*¹⁹

ANSWER. The President is to be chosen by Electors appointed in such manner as the different Legislatures shall direct, and his power ceases of course at the end of four years, which is only one year longer than the time for which the Governor of this state is elected. It is true he may then be re-elected for the same time, and so may our Governor. His power does not extend to rejecting a single law that two thirds of the Legislature think proper to pass — which power answers directly to [is exactly like] that of the Council of Revision in our own state. He cannot touch a shilling of money unless a law is passed for the purpose. — He can make no treaty, no permanent appointment to offices, nor, in fact, do anything whatever but by and with the consent of the Senate, except receiving Ambassadors and the common official powers that are vested in the Governor of our state by our Constitution — and in general his powers are so far from being superior to a European king that, on many occasions, they are inferior to the Governor of our state.

OBJECTION. *The trial by jury not provided for in civil cases.*²⁰

ANSWER. The Continental [federal] Court, as far as private citizens of different states may be concerned, is a Court of Appeals, and may, perhaps, in some instances be compared with our Chancery Court as well as to the Courts of Law in many of the other states where no jury is called; and as nothing is said to prevent a jury on cases of appeal to the Continental Court, it must remain to be established by the future laws of our Representatives in Congress. The

¹⁹ The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified 1951) limits presidents to two terms in office (eight years), plus, in the case of a vice-president assuming the office of a president who had died or resigned, two years of the previous president's term. Thus a person could be president up to ten years and no longer.

²⁰ Wording in the Anti-Federalist broadside: "The Trial by Jury, that sacred bulwark of liberty, is not provided for in Civil Cases."

Massachusetts Convention have proposed an explanation of this section, and we have no doubt but our Convention will do the same: but all trials between citizens of this state must and will be conducted in future, just as at present, and determined by a jury as usual.

OBJECTIONS 26, 27, and 28. *The great powers of the Continental [federal] Supreme Court, extending to all cases in law and equity [fairness] — allowing the court original jurisdiction in some cases and granting appeals to that court on both law and fact.*

ANSWER. This court is confined to these cases only which arise under the Constitution — all transactions between citizens that live in the same state must be determined in [the] future just as they are at present, that is, by jury and the laws of their own state. The Continental Court is intended to try all cases that respect Ambassadors and other public Ministers [government officials], and where a whole state may be a party [side in a case], it therefore must have the right of original jurisdiction in all such cases — and on cases of appeal from partial state Courts by citizens who live in or claim lands under grants of different states, it must have a right to determine on law, equity, and fact, or it can never answer the necessary purposes: but that it will in the most distant manner enable the rich to oppress the poor, or that it has a power in *all cases* arising in law and equity is a false and groundless insinuation, only made to answer party [faction] purposes; for every other matter of dispute that can be brought into this court must subsist between inhabitants of different states who will, in all probability, be men of property, merchants, or great landholders, and not poor men.

OBJECTION. *The power to constitute [create] Inferior Courts in every state.*

ANSWER. The clause here alluded to is that Congress may constitute tribunals inferior to the Supreme Court. This will be attended with convenience, but that it can be a grievance no one can suppose as such tribunals must be inferior to the Supreme Court whose powers are explained in the foregoing article, and who can have no control over citizens residing in the same state.

OBJECTION. *No provision is made to prevent placemen and pensioners.*²¹

ANSWER. No Government can make universal provision in such cases without doing injury to the common feelings of humanity. Would anyone wish to put it out of the power of our Representatives to save the old soldier who is wounded and maimed in fighting the battles of his country, from starving, or begging on his crutches from door to door? We think not. This is therefore one of those powers which must be left to the caution and discretion of those men whom we shall in future appoint to make laws for us.

OBJECTION. *Nor for the liberty of the press.*²²

ANSWER. The Continental [federal] laws can have no control over the internal regulations of the states; consequently, powers of this nature must remain where they are at present, that is, with the different state Legislatures. The Convention of Massachusetts has recommended a general explanation of all those state rights and privileges, and we have no doubt but our Convention will follow their example.

OBJECTION. *The power of appointing as many Continental [federal] officers as they shall think proper in every state, and thereby extending their influence.*²³

ANSWER. Every regular Government must have the privilege to appoint such inferior officers as may be necessary — their numbers must differ as circumstances occur and cannot be particularly defined. — It is a sufficient security that we have the power of electing the persons who will make such appointments, and whenever they conduct improperly we will elect others in their stead and bring them to punishment for their malconduct.

²¹ I.e., referring to the longheld British practice of providing government offices and salaries to unelected friends of the monarch and his or her cabinet.

²² Anti-Federalist broadside continues: "that grand palladium of liberty and scourge of tyrants."

²³ Anti-Federalist broadside continues: "over every part of the United States."

OBJECTION. *The great expense of the New Government, and the additional taxes which will be thereby occasioned [necessitated].*

ANSWER. It is an undoubted fact that the expense of supporting a Federal Government will not in any degree stand in competition with the great advantages which will be derived therefrom. — Our trade and navigation will undoubtedly be greatly increased — foreign markets will be opened to our vessels, which must serve to raise the price of our produce — the Western Posts with the extensive Fur Trade will undoubtedly be given up to our Government soon after it is established.

Anti-Federalists: A man must be very credulous and ignorant indeed who can suppose that the new government will not be more expensive. Will not the raising and supporting the army and navy in time of peace create additional expense? Can the multitude and variety of the salaries of the *continental* supreme court judges, the *continental inferior court judges in the different states*, and other civil officers in the judicial department be paid without great additional expense? Can a *federal town for the seat of the national government* be built without additional expense? . . . Can all these things, with many others, be accomplished without great additional expense and without laying heavy and burdensome taxes on the people?²¹

OBJECTION. *That the General Government guarantees to the several states the form, not the substance, of a republican government.*²⁵

ANSWER. The words of the Constitution are that *the United States shall guarantee to each state in the Union a republican*²⁶ *form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion*, and what more can the Government do? Should they dictate in what particular form each state Constitution should be made? A republican form of government is that which derives all its powers from the people — but the particular manner in which the people are to use that power must remain with themselves, or they would not be free. In short, this objection appears to have been introduced with no other intention but to swell up the number [of opponents to the Constitution].

OBJECTION. *It is not expressed that the several states retain the powers not given to the General Government, and that there is no bill of rights.*²⁷

ANSWER. By the first section of the Constitution it is declared that all legislative powers therein granted shall be vested in the Congress of the United States. Consequently the powers not granted remain with the people of the different states. — Bills of rights are grants by absolute sovereigns to the great body of the people to secure their privileges from encroachments or power; but in republican governments, where all power is derived from the people, the Constitution of the country — which gives certain privileges from the people to men whom they appoint as temporary law-makers — is to all intents and purposes a bill of rights, granted or surrendered by the people who are sovereigns in all republican countries. However, as Massachusetts Convention have recommended an explanation on this subject, we expect our Convention will do the same.

They likewise add, “*is it for the sake of the poor and common people that the rich and well-born are so indefatigable [persistent/tireless]? Or is it because they and their friends expect lucrative [profitable] offices under the New Government?*”

We answer that when the general welfare of our country is at stake when a peaceable, happy and united Government stands on one hand, and nothing but poverty, discord, and confusion on the other. — As honest and sincere well-wishers to our common country, we step forth with no other views than to counteract false prejudices and to state the principles of the Constitution with truth and candor — that the

²⁴ Albany Anti-Federal Committee, untitled broadside, 10 April 1788 [Early American Imprints #45215].

²⁵ Anti-Federalist objection continues: “and the states left at the mercy of the General Government to allow them such a *form* as they shall deem proper.”

²⁶ *Republican form of government*: one elected by the people; not referring to the later Republican Party.

²⁷ Anti-Federalist objection continues: “to secure any of the fundamental rights and liberties of the people.”

great and important subject may be impartially investigated. — If there are men who think as we do, that have more property and more good sense than the general run of the opposers, we trust that no honest man will object to the system only on that account; for all must know that upon the principles of the New Government the poor man's vote is as important as the rich man's, and when taxes are to be collected the rich man's estate must pay a large sum when the poor man will pay very little or nothing. . . .

Though we are inclined to believe the system [Constitution], with very few exceptions, as good as can be obtained in a country like this where there are a variety of people, states, and climates, we do not suppose it perfect, for we know perfection of wisdom is not with man; but we are most assuredly convinced that should we now reject this system on account of those few imperfections . . . we shall never get so far as we are at present on any other system whatever, and the consequence must be anarchy, confusion, and ruin to our country.

. . .

. . . THE GRAND AMERICAN UNION has already encircled us except on the one side where our haughty enemy still bleeds with the wounds of our conquest; and on the other a defenseless seacoast invites the avarice of an adventitious invader. Our neighbors and friends extend their arms to embrace us — UNITE then, ye lovers of our common country. Betray no unmanly jealousies [suspicions/ distrust] of those who have fought your battles and guided your counsels with success, and by one rational act convince the world that AMERICANS, as in war they have been firm and intrepid, so in peace they will be UNITED and HAPPY.

By Order of the Federal Committee,
ROBERT McCLALLEN, Chairman.

Members of the Committee.

STEPHEN LUSH
DANIEL HALE
THOMAS HUN
JOHN D.P. TEN EYCK
CORNELIUS GLEN
THEODORUS V.W. GRAHAM
JAMES CADLWELL
RICHARD SILL
PHILIP VAN RENSSELAER
LEONARD GANSEVOORT, jun.
JEREMIAH LANSINGH
STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER
JAMES BLOODGOOD
THOMAS L. WITBEEK.

ALBANY ANTI-FEDERAL COMMITTEE

untitled broadside, April 10, 1788²³

EXCERPTS

With regard to *amendments*, some of the strongest and most zealous advocates of the new constitution, *at first* and for a long time, affected to hold it up as a good system of government; but after various and repeated journeys into the country (having discovered that the people were generally opposed to the constitution . . . these same zealous advocates have since changed their ground and altered their plan of operations. They now acknowledge it to be defective but endeavor to prevail on the people *first* to adopt it and *afterwards* (like Massachusetts) *trust to a recommendation for future amendments*. Would it be prudent or safe for the people to surrender their dearest rights and liberties *to the discretionary disposal of their future rulers!* *First* to make a *surrender* and *afterwards* ask for terms of *capitulation*.

The freemen of America have fought and bled to oppose the oppression and usurpation of Great Britain, and shall they now resign these rights and privileges, to a government which, if possible, may be still more arbitrary and despotic? Sacred as well as profane history afford abundant examples to prove that the most strenuous asserters of liberty, in all ages, after having successfully triumphed over tyranny, have themselves become tyrants when entrusted by the people with unlimited and uncontrollable powers. . . .

These, among many others, are the reasons that have induced us to oppose the new constitution in its present form. A constitution destructive of the fundamental principles of the general as well as all the state governments, dangerous to the rights and liberties of the people, and which, if adopted without previous amendments, will, in our opinion, terminate in slavery.

We are, Gentlemen, your most humble Servants,
By order of the ANTI-FEDERAL COMMITTEE,
JER. V. RENSSELAER, CHAIRMAN
MAT. VISSCHER, CLERK

²⁸ Early American Imprints #41215.