

to be determined. An Hutchinson, &c. have been impeached by the *once* province of the Massachusetts-Bay.¹

GUARD YOUR RIGHTS, AMERICANS!

1. In December 1772 Benjamin Franklin, the colonial agent of Massachusetts, sent Thomas Cushing, speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, a cache of private letters that Thomas Hutchinson, Andrew Oliver, and others, had written (beginning in the mid-1760s) to Thomas Whately, a former secretary to the Treasury under George Grenville. (Whately had died in June 1772.) Franklin insisted that the letters be neither copied nor printed, but shown only to the proper persons. In June 1773 Samuel Adams read the letters in closed session to an outraged House of Representatives. The letter that angered the House most was, perhaps, one that Hutchinson wrote on 20 January 1769, which declared that "There must be an abridgment of what are called English liberties." The House voted overwhelmingly that the letters were designed "to overthrow the constitution of this government and to introduce arbitrary power." Shortly after, the House adopted resolutions denouncing the letter writers for seeking honor and profit at the expense of the colony's charter and constitution and the rights and liberties of the American colonies. The House petitioned the King requesting that Governor Hutchinson and Lieutenant Governor Oliver be removed from office. Some of these letters were printed in a Boston pamphlet and several Boston newspapers, and they were widely circulated throughout the American colonies.

Candidus I

Independent Chronicle, 6 December

On 23 December John Quincy Adams and Christopher Gore noted in letters that "Candidus" and "Honestus" were one and the same person. Since it was generally believed that Benjamin Austin, Jr., a leader of the Boston mob, was "Honestus," Adams and Gore believed that Austin was also "Candidus." "Honestus" had aroused the hostility of many prominent persons when, in 1786, he published a series of essays in the *Independent Chronicle* that severely criticized lawyers and called for substantial reform in the state's legal system.

A Salem gentleman, writing to a Boston friend on 23 December, also believed that "Honestus" and "Candidus" were written by the same person. He described Austin as the "*supposed* author" of the "Honestus" essays, who he never thought was the "tool" of Samuel Adams. However, the "laboured absurdities" of "Candidus" convinced the gentleman that he was wrong. Adams, the gentleman had learned, was "an enemy" to the Constitution and "Honestus" was "the oracle of his anti-federalism" (*Massachusetts Gazette*, 25 December).

For criticisms of "Candidus," who published other essays in the *Independent Chronicle* on 20 December and 3 January 1788, see unsigned pieces in the *Massachusetts Gazette*, 11 December and 4 January; a spurious "Candidus," *Massachusetts Centinel*, 26 December; "Thomas a Kempis," *Massachusetts Centinel*, 29 December; and "Junius," *Massachusetts Gazette*, 4 January 1788.

Mess'rs. ADAMS & NOURSE,¹ The Constitution recommended by the Convention, is a subject of the greatest importance, to every individual of these States; and ought to be seriously considered. The respectability

of the characters who composed that Assembly, without doubt, will have its due weight; yet it cannot be supposed, that the citizens of America will so far rely on the abilities of those gentlemen, as to concur in their measures, while any doubts remain on their minds, respecting their salutary operations.

Some leading arguments offered in favour of the Constitution, are that our situation, is such, as renders it absolutely necessary, we should establish some Federal Plan of Government;—that the present Constitution, is the *only one* that can ever be adopted; and that if we *reject this* the consequences will be fatal to this country. These dreadful apprehensions seem to preclude every candid enquiry on the subject: For if we *must comply*, without even a lisp of hesitation, it is needless to offer it to the people, for their consideration. If the authors are *deified*, and their works pronounced *infallible*, it is delivered to the people, rather for their *implicit acquiescence*, than for their *free deliberations*.

It is also said, that the States have no other alternative, than to *accept* it in every particular, or totally to *reject* it. These observations, however I conceive, are mere assertions, without evidence. The people being called on to convene, and deliberate, proves that the Convention themselves, supposed the plan was subject to amendments. Neither can we imagine, those respectable characters, would insinuate an idea so affronting, and degrading, to the Freemen of these States, as that they *must submit* in the gross, to the Constitution offered, notwithstanding they might have the most weighty reasons to reject some *particular parts*.

It is further said, *that anarchy and civil war, will ensue, provided we reject the proposed Constitution*: This is a bugbear, raised to influence a very respectable part of the community. Can it be supposed that the people are so savage, and void of every principle of common prudence, that they would abandon all their deliberations in Council, and rush immediately to arms? The people of these States, are too wise and considerate, to be guilty of such horrid imprudencies: They are too enlightened to decide their political controversies by the SWORD. Those persons therefore, who raise such vile suggestions, are endeavouring to effect certain purposes, by working on the tender passions of the honest and well-disposed.

Some persons are for adopting the Constitution, without any farther consideration, as they say it is *impossible* for us to be in a worse situation than at present. Such men are fit subjects to answer any purposes whatever, and are acting a part which they cannot justify to themselves or posterity. Are not such sentiments degrading to the character of Freemen? It must be a melancholly crisis when the people are tired of guarding their liberties; and are resigned to whatever government

dealt to them. If our commerce is failing, and our industrious citizens are distressed, so far from being dilatory, the more caution is required, to adopt such a plan as will remedy their complaints. Let such persons read the history of other nations, and then judge whether it is *impossible* that our situation should be worse.

Is it presumed, that the wisdom of this people has so far forsaken them, that they are willing to accede without any examination, to a mode of government, which may affect millions of their posterity? Or is it conceived that the period has arrived when they are ready to resign every pretension to judge for themselves, and dare not scrutinize any establishments on which depend their political happiness and welfare?

On the other hand, if the State Conventions do not approve of every paragraph, *must the whole plan* become null and void? Shall the people, after being at the trouble of choosing members to meet in Convention; and taxing themselves with the expence of their assembling, be *obliged* to relinquish the whole business, and throw up every prospect of succeeding in their attempts, to establish a permanent government? These suggestions I conceive are artfully introduced to mislead the people, and are calculated to operate on their *fears*, so far as to influence them to accede *in every particular* to the proposed plan, although they might wish to make some very essential alterations.

Is it not the greatest absurdity to suppose, that the plan offered, *cannot* be amended previous to its adoption,—when it expressly provides for proposing amendments after it has begun to operate? Would it not be the height of folly, to adopt a plan *entire*, in expectation of altering some very essential parts at a future period? Surely the most prudent method is, to rectify all important matters, while we are assembled to deliberate on the subject, rather than to hazard the chance of feeling evils, when possibly it may be too late to remedy them? These are considerations, worthy our serious attention.

Some zealots are in extacy, when they speak of the present Constitution, and think it as sacred as the Commandments delivered from *Sinai*. But if we recur to what gave rise to the Convention, we shall not find that any thing super-natural was expected. The plain truth of the case is, these States finding the necessity of adopting a Federal plan to regulate their commerce, promote their agriculture and manufactures, chose from each State a number of respectable characters to meet for the above purposes.—They accordingly met, and after four months deliberation, they matured the plan now offered for our consideration. No man I presume did suppose at the time of their choice, that the devised plan, whatever it might be, was to be *rejected* or *approved* in every

particular. The principal design at first was, to bring forward some preliminary articles, by which the people might know the general disposition of the States; and from thence they would be able to judge, how far it was probable a Federal system could be adopted. The Constitution now offered is the outline of a plan, which probably might be agreed on with certain amendments by the whole confederacy. This knowledge of the inclination of the several States, is as much as we could rationally have expected at the first meeting of the Convention.

Those persons who are in such *great haste* to adopt the present plan, should consider that even the smallest treaties and most common business of legislation require many overtures before they are accomplished. Certainly then so great an undertaking as the Federal Constitution of thirteen Independent Sovereign States, so various in their interests, cannot be compleated without the greatest caution and deliberation. We should not be so greatly impatient if we considered this important truth, *that on the wise establishment of a Federal plan, the liberties we have so dearly purchased, wholly depend.*

The grand question therefore now is, what objections have we to the system offered? The State Conventions when they assemble, without doubt will keep the *original plan*, as entire as possible. It is not supposed, that they will object to any matters, but such as they conceive are destructive to the liberties of the people. Provided objections are made, "that a bill of rights is wanted: That the liberty of the press is not fully secured: That the powers of Congress to raise armies, lay impost, excise and direct taxation, are too great and dangerous: That the representation is inadequate: That the executive is vested with too extensive authority, and may tend to despotism: That the Legislatures of the several States would in time be annihilated: That the Congressional body would become independent of their constituents, by being paid out of the public treasury: That the choice of President by a detached body of electors was dangerous and tending to bribery; or if it is conceived that the States ought to confederate for the purposes of commerce and amity, rather than for those of legislation and taxation.["] If after a mature and candid examination the State Conventions should consider the foregoing objections of the highest importance, without doubt they would propose, that such particulars should be *erased*, and *amendments* inserted.

The State Conventions in case any alterations are required, have it in their power to choose delegates to meet again in Continental Convention. The objections (if any) of the several States would then be fully known, and after examining the sentiments of the whole, some plan it is probable would be devised, that would meet the approbation of the confederacy. As the people are now convinced (even more than