

Federalist dbq essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

With respect to the federal Constitution, the Jeffersonian Republicans are usually characterized as strict constructionists who were opposed to the broad constructionism of the Federalists. However, during the presidencies of Jefferson and Madison this characterization of the two parties was not so accurate. In the years of 1801 to 1817, both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, while supporting a strict construction of the constitution, addressed to loose interpretation of the constitution during their presidencies, while the Federalist, originally supporting a broad view, countered the Democratic-Republicans with a literal definition. The presidents both found their original beliefs on the constitution were beginning to change and they found themselves on middle ground. Primarily, the Jeffersonian Republicans had a traditional way of viewing things. This meant the Jeffersonian Republicans stuck to the strict non-lenient interpretation of the Constitution. On August 13, 1800, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Gideon Granger, a future member of Jefferson's cabinet, stating "...it(our country) can never be harmonious and solid while so respectable a portion of its citizens support principles which go directly to a change of the federal constitution.." (Document A) Jefferson believed that the Constitution should remain unchanged and affairs that are not given the power to be regulated by the Congress should be regulated by individual states.

" Our country is too large to have its affairs directed by a single government" (Document A) He believed that majority of the legislature of the U. S. must preserve the federal Constitution and states must preserve the rights they are granted. In a letter to Samuel Miller eight years later, he states " Certainly no power to prescribe any religious exercise or to assume authority

in religious discipline”(Document B) Jefferson show his support for the Bill of Rights by making it clear that the federal government has no power to change a religion with this statement. Subsequently, Jefferson contradicted strict constructionism eventually. The Embargo Act of 1807, passed by Thomas Jefferson, closed off all trade with foreign countries. In a speech to the House by John Randolph, Jefferson is criticize by Randolph for this action because their party originally believed that the federal government should be weak and absolutely shouldn't have the power to regulate commerce and equalize duties, both of which are not granted to it by the Constitution (Document F). Farmers, who were supporters of the Democratic Republican Party, were angered by the Embargo Act because they did not have a market for their crops and were fast losing income. While merchants turned to smuggling goods to the British for profit (Document C). On July 12, 1816, in a letter to Samuel Kercheval, Jefferson states “ I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changed in laws” (Document G) Jefferson's weak character is further shown in this letter as he opposes himself by saying that. Lastly, Jefferson stated, “ laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.” (Document G) By this statement it is evident that Jefferson is now more into the side of loose interpretation of the constitution. Even though, the Jeffersonian Republicans began to show more of a broad constructionists view, the Federalists also showed their stricter side. On December 9, 1814, Daniel Webster stated the following in a speech to the House of Representatives ““ Where is it written in the Constitution, in what article or section is it contained, that you may take children from their parents...” (Document D) This statement shows how though they are

federalist and they should want a strong military and navy no matter what, their principles and morality comes first. Another instance in which, the Federalist show their views changed is in The Hartford Convention of 1815. “ Congress shall not have power, without the concurrence of two thirds of both houses, to interdict the commercial intercourse between the United States and any foreign nation, or the dependencies thereof.” (Document E) This is another clear example of the federalist moving to the Jeffersonian Republican’s side. The federalist are contradicting themselves by stating that throughout this statement that the federal government can’t do anything without approval from the individual states.

Conclusively, to some extent the statement that Jeffersonian Republicans are characterized as strict constructionalists and the Federalists are broad constructionalists is inaccurate. From 1801 to 1817 both the Federalists and Jefferson Republicans altered their party’s policies towards interpreting the Constitution. The Jefferson Republicans contradicted their view of strict constructionism numerous times, as well as the Federalist contradicted their broad views during the presidencies of Jefferson and Madison. The Federalists did show strict interpretation of the Constitution when they showed their opposition to the war. However, for the most part the Jeffersonian Republicans were strict constructionalists and the Federalists were broad constructionalists.