

Arguments of political representation in the us



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“ The vile state governments are sources of pollution which will contaminate the American name for ages.... Smite them,” Henry Knox urged Rufus King sitting in the Philadelphia Convention, “ smite them, in the name of God and the people.”[1]The jostling of various interest groups, the self promoting ambitions of lawmaking, the persistent adhering to popular demands, these “ excesses of democracy”[2]instigated the meeting at Annapolis, and consequently the convening of delegates in Philadelphia.

It could be reasonably argued that the limitations of the Articles of Confederation in yielding Congress the power to raise revenue, to regulate trade, to pay of its debts, and to act successfully in international affairs was the primary reasoning for convening. But, there was more to it than the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. It was the unwillingness of the legislatures to do “ justice,” and this matter of justice said Washington, is the origin of the evils we now feel.”[3]

According to Madison, the matter of justice “ contributed more to that uneasiness which produced the convention and prepared the public mind for general reform than those which occurred to our national character and interest from the inadequacy of the Confederation to its immediate object.”[4]It was this matter of “ justice” that facilitated the uneasiness which generated the convention and organized the public for change more than the inadequacy of the Articles of Confederation.

The convention brought together men whose discussions put in place an establishment of an unusually influential remote national government the like of which was never seen before. It began with the conception of a

classical tradition of civic humanism and its patrician code of disinterested public leadership a complete turnaround from the popular individualistic and acquisitive era of the early 1780s.

Ideally, arguments about justice between democratic legislators such as Findley who were considered by the likes of Madison as “men of factious tempers” and “of local prejudices” and “advocates and parties to the causes which they determine,”[5] that dominated the convention at Philadelphia and consequently the creation of the constitution.

Eventually, what prevailed was disinterested patriotism and as the debates continued the arguments were written down as a basic deed that defined and restrict government. The constitution was not to become part of government,[6] but separate and higher to all actions of government and a precursor of government.

This constitution became the pronouncement of the people themselves. [7] Their arguments were their experiences the resistance between supremacy and liberty and the interference of imperial sanctions they had defended against. Therefore, they argued against “corruption” that system they had observed of the British a system where ministers of the Crown are at the same time members of Parliament. The linkage David Hume called “influence” which they determinedly destroyed in 1776.[8]

They argued vehemently against “virtual” representation; the British idea that the process of election was secondary to representation and therefore taxation without representation is justified. They were aware that it was this challenge that ushered in their revolution. They were cognizant at the

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convention that if citizens were to be correctly represented in a legislature “ not only did the people have to vote directly for the members of the legislature, but they also had to be represented by members whose numbers were proportionate to the size of the population they spoke for.”[9]They were unrelenting on the idea that actual representation made the practice of election not secondary but indispensable to representation and that chosen representatives “ not only had to be for the people they also had to be of the people.[10]

Implicit in the idea also was the belief an underlying thought that no politician no matter the number of votes they attained could completely represent the citizens. Therefore, citizens could be represented in diverse ways and in varieties of organizations.[11]The debate was unrelenting in asserting that sovereignty stayed with the people themselves.

The people, they insisted must never disappear by the process of representation which meant “ all public officials became delegated and mistrusted agents of the people, temporarily holding bits and pieces of the people’s power out so to speak on always recallable loan.”[12]

This accepted wisdom of thinking of people in this amazing way endured at the convention and founders were able to formulate federalism, the extraordinary sharing of power between central and local governments that establish two governing bodies ruling over the same terrain, the Congress and the separate legislatures. They were firm on the concept of sovereignty so much so that a suggestion for an inclusion of a Bill of Rights,[13]was unanimously turned down by delegates. A conviction that unlike England

where the King's privilege was sacrosanct, in America all power existed in the people who with their ballots apportioned fragments of it to their representatives, therefore, the Bill of Rights was unnecessary.

What made these arguments sustainable was that it was written down. What made it exceptional in the history of mankind, it [the deed] was placed before the people for ratification and as each state constitutional convention ratified the deed the people themselves became the actual power. The consent of the people made the constitution a primary law invulnerable from legislative infringement. It gave judges the ability to oblige limits on what Congress enacts as law and hence a precursor of Judicial reviews.[14] Thus, the radicalism of the founders infused with Lockean beliefs ushered in a new republic. A government derived from the people.

This logic of republican equality brought ordinary people into the political process and restricted the prospect of preferment[15] in public life. These ideologies that gave birth to a nation have traversed many roads and has sustained. Very many writers have investigated the idea that sustained America and reached different conclusions. Lakoff though takes a new approach. He looks at America from the background of a family.

He suggested a family has two types of orientation, the Strict Father Orientation and Nurturant Parent orientation. The application of each, he relates to two ideologies; conservatism and Liberalism. With these two models he created two world views. He posits that it is through the morals of this two world views America operates politically, socially and policy wise. In essence he sees the nation metaphorically as a family. He believes that

political and moral ideas develop systematic ways from our models of ideal families. He claimed that our political system is governed by two world views, the strict father and the nurturant parent.

Both internalized by constituents in terms of metaphorical concepts and as a consequence two ideologies, conservatism and liberalism. Linking morality to politics he posited that the language of framing is what set the two ideologies apart. That is, essentially, it is not what you say, but how you say it.

[1]Knox quoted in William Winslow Crosskey and William Jeffery Jr., *Politics and the Constitution in the History of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), III, 420, 421.

[2]Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, May 6, 1788 in Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Rush* , I, 461; Elbridge Gerry, in Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1778* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1911, rev. ed., 1937), I, 48.

[3]George Washington to John Jay, May 18, 1776, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington* , XVIII, 432.

[4]James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 24, 1788, in Boyd et al., eds., *Papers of Jefferson* , XII, 276.

[5]Cooke, ed., *The Federalist* No. 10; [William Findley], *A Review of the Revenue System Adopted at the First Congress under the Federal Constitution ...* (Philadelphia: Bailey, 1794), 117.

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[6]Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

[7]James Wilson, Wilson's declaration at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787.

[8]United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 6, Clause 2

[9]Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012)., p. 182.

[10]Ibid., p. 183.

[11]Ibid., p. 183.

[12]Ibid., p. 184.

[13]George Mason withheld his signature to the constitution on account of this.

[14]James Iredell, *Calder v. Bull*, 3 U. S. (Dall.) 386, 1 L. Ed. 648 (1798) which became the Principle of Judicial Review.

[15]Clifford K. Shipton, "Jonathan Trumbull," in *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographies of Those Who Attended Harvard College* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1951), 8: 269.