

Debate between the federalists and anti-federalists



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Though the delegates at Philadelphia produced the Constitution, ratification was far from assured. While many saw the need for an organized, democratic national government, many people that remembered British tyranny were against the formation of such an institution. This led to the division into two separate groups in support of and opposed to the Constitution, known as the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, respectively. While each side had strong arguments to support their positions, the Anti-Federalists proved the most idealistic and democratic, though the leadership of the Federalists would prove too effective to overcome.

The formation of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists seemed inevitable from the inception of the Articles of Confederation. Those that favored the ratification of the Articles' most comprehensive successor, the Constitution, became known as Federalists and consisted mostly of people who lived in cities or engaged in trade, including large landowners. They were supported by merchants, land spectators, and many southern planters who wanted a strong government capable of handling the problems facing the United States both at home and abroad. Opponents of the Constitution were called Anti-Federalists, and consisted of mostly small farmers, especially those that were in debt, who felt that a strong central government was a threat to liberty and too far removed from the people in its representative structure. The Anti-Federalists were also especially opposed to the lack of a bill of rights and the "necessary and proper" clause that granted Congress the right to carry out specifically listed powers.

Two centuries removed from the debate, though the United States has continued to evolve and devolve at points in its history, the Anti-Federalist concern has been proven correct, specifically in their argument that "<https://assignbuster.com/debate-between-the-federalists-and-anti-federalists/>

government would be impersonal, unrepresentative, dominated by men of wealth, and oppressive of the poor and working classes” (Bruns, 1986).

Questions of state sovereignty led directly to the Civil War, and the issues of class division has created a disparity of wealth and power that continues to grow with each passing year. The population of the United States has also grown apathetic and cynical, accepting the relative ineffectiveness of the federal government as unchangeable.

While the populist position of the Anti-Federalists made it the obvious choice for the majority of Americans, the Federalist leadership through such men as Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, made the latter group the victor. With the widely read Federalist Papers, the tide was turned in favor of ratification of the Constitution; and while the Anti-Federalists had the ideals of liberty and sovereignty on their side, their arguments were bested by the persistence and rationality of the Federalists. Once the powerful colony of Virginia, it was only a matter of time before the Constitution was ratified, and the United States experiment in government formation began in earnest.

REFERENCES

Bruns, R. A. (1986). A More Perfect Union: The Creation of the United States Constitution. The Charters of Freedom. Retrieved May 5, 2008, from [http://www. archives. gov/ exhibits/charters/constitution_history. html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_history.html)