

The federalist papers essay

Government



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The *Federalist Papers* is a compilation of essays written under the pen-name Publius by three notable men: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay.

Here, they tried to present their arguments on why there was a need to ratify the Constitution in 1788. They addressed the apprehension of the people about the government that would be established by the Constitution by outlining and elaborating the processes that would uphold the people's rights. However, many criticisms met their defense of this government including John Calhoun and Robert Dahl. These two equally distinguished men claimed that real justice cannot be achieved by heeding Publius's advice and they each recommended a way of securing a more just society. Calhoun in the *Disquisition* deliberately rejects some of the propositions made by Publius in *The Federalist Papers* including the idea of an extended and complex republic, the notion that government institutions are products of choice and reflection and not by force and accident, the dogma of the numerical majority as well as the theory of restraining governmental power via the separation of powers.

Fundamentally, it can be observed that Calhoun claimed that *The Federalist Papers* theory provides insufficient safeguards for the preservation of limited government. He saw the absence of such provision to be quite problematic, thus he claimed that Publius's extended republic fails to avoid the tyranny of the majority and that it actually perpetuates it by allowing a numerical majority to formulate any law it deemed to be a pertinent government business. He further argued that taking man's nature in consideration, the possibility of such majorities becoming overbearing is very likely, which

could lead them to create and enact laws that will work on their advantage subordinating the minority's interest. On the other hand, Dahl argued that in general, the constitution failed because the Framers allowed certain provisions that are considered as “ undemocratic” which included acceptance of slavery and the limitation of the right to vote to just the white men. However, his most significant criticism was on the Senate and the Electoral College. He argued that these two are not representative of the people because they are based on geography rather than the population. This, he said, would favor the coalitions of smaller states which may have interests that do not necessarily match that of the nation entirely. In his book *A Preface to Democracy*, he provided a comparison of the American system with that of the other democracies and he concluded that countries with more proportional representation usually create more stable democracy.

He claimed that multi-party states pave way for proportional representation and that coalition governments lead to better democratic equality. On the contrary, he argued that the Constitution supports policies that could benefit only the most influential lobbyist, rather than the majority of the people.

Dahl addressed the issue by introducing the concept of polyarchy, which is a form of government where the power is distributed to three persons or more. It is a nation-state having conditions which are necessary in observing the democratic principle. He provided eight conditions to be met for majority rule to happen in an organization.

First, each member of an organization must be able to exercise the right to choose among alternatives (i. e. voting); each expression will have equal weights when tabulated. The choice that garnered the most number of

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expressions will be proclaimed the winning choice. In addition, in case any member would deem a choice necessary to be included in the alternatives, such will be included in the choices and would be added to those previously scheduled. Furthermore, all members must have the same knowledge about the presented alternatives and after they are voted upon, the one with the highest number of votes will rule over the ones with lesser votes. At the end of the day, the winning alternative (either a leader or a policy) will take effect.

Thus, it could be observed that either the inter-election procedures may come subordinate to the decisions arrived at after the election or that these decisions are governed by the preceding seven conditions, or it could be both. Meeting the above conditions and scoring high on such measures will result to polyarchy. Calhoun suggested almost the similar concept in securing a more just society. He introduced the idea of majority tyranny, which essentially is majority rule wherein the people's interest offset the belief of the minority. He argued that it is important to address the interest of each and everyone to be able to create a government or make it function well.

This can be done by identifying the people's choice which he refers to as the 'proper organism'. He asserts that someone chosen by the people would delegate them in the government and would act according to what is best for them. Thus, it can be concluded that Calhoun also deemed voting needed and that representation for each community must be proportionate to its population. In addition to that he argued that achieving a perfect society

would necessitate the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of the people.

In essence, it can be said that both Calhoun and Dahl believe on the importance of having the voice of the majority heard so that a more just society can be achieved. As was stated above, they saw these important because it is a way to identify what the people's needs and wants are. Moreover, having someone that the people chose to govern them would result to a more representative government where policies and leaders work for what is best for most of the members of the population. Thus, it would not be favoring the few but answering to the needs of the majority. In doing so, a more just society is achieved.