

Proper Checks for The Security of Rights: The Anti-Federalist Objections to The
New Constitution

The American revolution was a fight for freedom, and the Constitution was written in order to protect life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and private property. The Anti-Federalists did not agree with the Federalists on a lot of things, but did agree on the common goal of the well-being and strength of the United States. The Anti-Federalists believed the new Constitution was a trap, and that it benefited the wealthy and ambitious. They both agreed on the common man being best fit for the presidency, and they wanted to educate people to become more virtuous. The Anti-Federalists wanted a clear and concise way of securing the rights of the people, which included a bill of rights and limiting the government in search of protecting liberty.

The Anti-Federalists distrust the government, and wanted to limit the power that was held by limiting commerce power, rotation of office and adding a bill of rights.¹ By reducing governmental control, they would give a better representation of the common people, and would have the ability to protect republican liberty. With confidence in the government, the Federalists believed in the protection of rights with limitation, which did not include a bill of rights, unlike the Anti-Federalists. They thought educating people in virtue would lead to a more virtuous citizenry, and would be a great key in order to run a successful nation; however the federalists did state that virtue would not be a stable way of maintaining a government, due to the fact that a lot of people are self interested.

By educating people with virtue, the Anti-Federalist believed that the common good of the people will manifest throughout the nation and come to fruition in the government. In order to run a successful government for the people, the Anti-Federalist wanted to echo the people.²

¹ Herbert Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*; The Federal Farmer, pg.69

² Herbert Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*; Melancton Smith, pg.348

The middle class was said to be the most virtuous citizens in the United States; they have skin in the game, with fear of losing what they have worked for. The rich don't understand the struggle of the common man, and they prosper in the current system and don't want change. The poor have no skin in the game, having nothing to lose makes them dangerous to republican liberty.³ The middle class has the least temptation and vices, and have balance. They have worked for what they have through struggle and success.

Looking over the new Constitution, the Anti-Federalists firmly believe that it will strictly benefit the wealthy and ambitious. The Federal Farmer states that, “Good government is generally the result of experience and gradual improvements, and a punctual execution of the laws is essential to the preservation of life, liberty, and property”, which supports the idea of limiting government in order to preserve life, liberty, and property.⁴ The Federal Farmer also talks about the importance of protecting liberty over property; which avoids the idea of Ambition versus ambition, to insure liberty. The Anti-Federalists felt that along with the new Constitution, that there needed to be a bill of rights. The Federalists’ first priority was not to add a bill of rights, which is why they allowed the Anti-Federalists a small victory in creating the new Constitution.

The Anti-Federalists’ goal was to insure the protection of rights, protect commerce power, and limit the control of the government. Installing a bill of rights was very important in order to make sure the rights of the people were clear and solidified. Prioritizing the common man’s interest was crucial in making sure virtue was leading the government. The

³ Herbert Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*; Melancton Smith, pg.341

⁴ Herbert Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*; The Federal Farmer, pg.69

Anti-Federalists feared government control, and did not trust in, for the security of the rights of the citizens of the nation.