



Anti-Federalists vs. Federalists

It is the year 1787. After twenty years of existence the USA was facing a severe economic depression, an economy out of control, property rights issues, diplomatic relation difficulties with France and Spain, and a brewing rebellion. The colonists found themselves in an eerily similar situation: everyone agreeing that change was needed... but few agreeing as to what kind.

The states had called a Constitutional Congress to convene in Philadelphia, PA to discuss what the path forward should look like. The delegates were sent to "tweak" the Articles of Confederation, but instead decided to wipe the slate clean and start over. The document that was created from this event is the United States Constitution.

The creation of the Constitution entailed hours of debate and compromise, and even when it was completed, some delegates were unhappy with it. The task of fixing the ailing Confederate government was not complete yet; each state had to ratify, or approve, the Constitution. Basically, people divided into two groups, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. Each of their viewpoints is worth examining, as they both have sound reasoning.

The Anti-Federalists did not want to ratify the Constitution. Basically, they argue that:

- It gave too much power to the national government at the expense of the state governments.
- There was no bill of rights.
- The national government could maintain an army in peacetime.
- Congress, because of the 'necessary and proper clause,' wielded too much power.
- The executive branch held too much power.

Of these complaints, the lack of a bill of rights was the most effective. The American people had just fought a war to defend their rights, and they did not want an intimidating national government taking those rights away again. The lack of a bill of rights was the focus of the Anti-Federalist campaign against ratification.

The Federalists, on the other hand, tried to answer all of the Anti-Federalist complaints:

- The separation of powers into three independent branches protected the rights of the people. Each branch represents a different aspect of the people, and because all three branches are equal, no one group can assume control over another.
- A listing of rights can be a dangerous thing. If the national government were to protect specific listed rights, what would stop it from violating rights other than the listed ones? Since we can't list all the rights, the Federalists argued that it's better to list none at all.

Anti-Federalist Quotes

	<p>“We are come hither to preserve the poor Commonwealth of Virginia, if it can possibly be done: Something must be done to preserve your liberty and mine: The Confederation; this same despised government merits, in my opinion, the highest encomium: It carried us through a long and dangerous war: It rendered us victorious in that bloody conflict with a powerful nation: It has secured us a territory greater than any European Monarch possesses: And shall a government which has been thus strong and vigorous, be accused of imbecility and abandoned for want of energy?” ~ Patrick Henry</p>
	<p>“If your American Chief (President) be a man of ambition and abilities, how easy is it or him to render himself absolute: The army is in his hands, and if he be a man of address, it will be attached to him; and it will be the subject of long mediation with him to seize the first auspicious moment to accomplish his design; and, Sir, will the American spirit solely relieve you when this happens? I would rather infinitely, and I am sure most of this Convention are of the same opinion, have a King, Lords, and Commons, than a Government so replete with such insupportable evils.” ~ Patrick Henry</p>
	<p>“Congress will ever exercise their powers to levy as much money as the people can pay. They will not be restrained from direct taxes by the consideration that necessity does not require them.” - Melancton Smith</p>

Federalist Quotes

	<p>“If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.” ~ Alexander Hamilton</p>
	<p>“On the other hand, it will be equally forgotten that the vigor of government is essential to the security of liberty; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well-informed judgment, their interest can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidden appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants.” ~ Alexander Hamilton</p>