

BACKGROUND OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION IN PENNSYLVANIA IN 1776-1787

> Thesis for the Degree of M. A. MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE Carl Christian Glogofsky 1953

HESIS





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BACKGROUND OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION IN PENNSYLVANIA IN 1776-1787

By

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### **A** THESIS

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science

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Background of the Federal Constitution in Pennsylvania in 1776-1787

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#### Introduction

Pennsylvania from 1776 onward was the scene of an evolving political battle between two forces; namely, State Rightists versus Strong Central Government advocates. The two political theories emerged slowly from 1776 to 1785. In fact, one is hard put to find evidence that there were two such contending forces. The issues up to 1785 were not clear, feelings were not yet drawn up concretely. Instead, one finds a loose-knit, rambling, political structure. Neither side up to 1785 knew specifically what it believed in. It took the Articles of Confederation and the draft of the Federal Constitution to distinguish the contending forces in a manner in which they can be studied. By 1785 the weak Articles of Confederation had failed to satisfy many. It was widely felt in Pennsylvania by 1785 that if the states were to survive economically, politically, and physically they must consolidate into a stronger union. The States Rightists believed that a stronger union would only lead to tyranny and destruction or annihilation of all liberty.

By September, 1787, and the formation of the Federal Constitution the issues were clear; the States Rightists opposed the Constitution while advocates of a stronger union were for it. Before entering upon the struggle of the Federal Constitution we must go back to the year 1776 and the State Constitution of 1776. This is necessary as in this Constitution we glimpse for the first time the feelings of the States Rightists. From here onward we can see the gradual evolution of the two contending forces, how and why they emerged, and who composed them.

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### Acknowledgment

Special thanks are due to Dean Thomas H. Osgood, Dr. Walter R. Fee, and Dr. Robert E. Brown as it is through their thoughtfullness and cooperation that I am able to complete this essay for my late husband, Carl Christian Glogofsky, to fulfill his requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Constance A. Glogofsky

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#### Chapter I

#### The State Constitution of 1776

The State Constitution of 1776 was drawn up by men who feared a strong executive. This is evident as the Supreme Executive Power was placed in the Supreme Executive Council which consisted of twelve members and a President who was elected by the Council to preside over them.<sup>1</sup> This fear of a strong executive was quite natural as the colonies had just broken with the British who were looked upon as a tyrannous power.<sup>2</sup> A strong central power or a strong executive was plainly identified with the British, thus a strong executive was to be avoided like the plague.<sup>3</sup>

The Supreme Executive Council was to be comprised of twelve persons; one each from Philadelphia City, and Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks Counties to serve a three year term, one each from Lancaster, York, Cumberland, and Berks to serve a two year term, and one each from Northhampton, Bedford, Northumberland, and Westmoreland to serve a one year term. This Council was given "supreme executive power". After the first election all would be chosen for a three year term.<sup>4</sup>

The Constitution provided for a democratically elected one-house legislature with supreme legislative power. The legislature was chosen annually on the second Tuesday of October by freemen, twentyone years old, who had resided in the state one year before the election of representatives, and who had paid taxes for the said year, with

<sup>1.</sup> The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1776), pp. 10-11. As counties were added so were members to the Supreme Executive Council. By 1787 there were nineteen in the Council.

<sup>2.</sup> Benjamin Franklin, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, A. H. Smyth, ed., 10 vols. (New York, 1907), IX, 139. Hereafter cited Franklin, Writings.

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 16, 1776.

<sup>4.</sup> The Constitution of Pennsylvania, p. 12.

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the exception that sons of freeholders could wote though paying no taxes.<sup>5</sup>

It must be said here that this provision excluded few, if any, white males over twenty-one from the vote. From 1776 on, every white male over twenty-one who wished to vote did so; the tax provision notwithstanding. Throughout the state the provision saying that a man had to pay his taxes to vote was not enforced. The legislature of Pennsylvania in 1787 noted this most carefully. They said that all who wished to vote could do so.<sup>6</sup> The general feeling throughout the state was that a man did not lose his suffrage because the collector did not come around, or because lists of taxables were not made out by the assessors. Examples were brought in from all over the state where men voted and where there were no lists of taxation present.<sup>7</sup> The rest of the provision that a man had to be a freeman or a son of a freeman was no handicap. Practically all white males over twentyone were freemen. This is best seen when in 1787 there was an estimated 70,000<sup>8</sup> qualified electors out of a population of approximately 390,000.<sup>9</sup> In a society in which the adult men constituted less than twenty per cent of the population, 70,000 voters would include almost the entire adult male population. This was a democratic society where practically no male over twenty-one was excluded from the vote.

<sup>5.</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>6.</sup> Thomas Lloyd, Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1787), I, 109. Hereafter cited Debates. 7. Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>8.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 17, 1787.

<sup>9.</sup> Wayland F. Dunaway, <u>A</u> History of Pennsylvania (New York, 1948), p. 196.

Practically all men were freemen as Benjamin Franklin pointed out when he said, "every man in America is employed; the greater part in cultivating their own lands, the rest in handicrafts, mavigation, and commerce. The Americans are cultivators of land; those engaged in fishery and commerce are few compared with the others".<sup>10</sup> This population of freemen elected the House of Representatives and the Supreme Executive Council as well as Justices and the Council of Censors.

The Constitution of 1776 provided further for Courts of Justice which were to be established in the City of Philadelphia and in every county.<sup>11</sup> A supreme judicial body called the Council of Censors was to be chosen every seven years and to consist of two persons from each city and county. It was to have the sole power to review acts of the legislature and executive, to examine accounts of the government, and to decide upon the advisability of amending or altering the Constitution and the calling of a Constitutional Convention. The Council of Censors was to be comprised to delegates chosen on the basis of equal representation for all districts.<sup>12</sup> This article, and the one calling for the Council to be chosen every seven years, led many to criticize the Constitution as undemocratic and too slow to revise when changes were needed.<sup>13</sup> These attacks came from a group called the Republicans who later were to become advocates of the Federal Constitution.

11. The Constitution of Pennsylvania, p. 11.

<sup>10.</sup> Benjamin Franklin, The Works of Benjamin Franklin, John Bigelow, ed., (New York, 1904), XII, 160.

<sup>12.</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>13.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 16, 1776.

All members of the Assembly were required to take an eath -"I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ do swear ( or affirm) that as a member of this Assembly, I will not propose or assent to any bill, vote, or resolution, which shall appear to me injurious to the people; nor do or consent to any act or thing whatever that shall have a tendency to lessen or abridge their rights and privileges, as declared in the Constitution of this State; but will in all things conduct myself as a faithful, honest Representative and Guardian of the people, according to the best of my judgement and ability.<sup>#14</sup>

All Representatives were required to take religious tests swearing that they believed in one God and that the Old and New Testaments were divinely inspired.<sup>15</sup>

This Constitution was drawn up by representatives of the freeman of Pennsylvania, in general convention, for the express purpose of framing a government. The General Convention declared, by the authority vested in them by their constituents, that the Constitution of the Commonwealth was in effect from September 28, 1776 onward.<sup>16</sup> The Second Continental Congress had passed a resolution on May 10, 1776, and a preamble five days later encouraging the formation of a state government as they felt one was needed because of the break with Britain.<sup>17</sup> In Pennsylvania this resolution was net with three cheers at the State House in Philadelphia.<sup>18</sup>

Encouraged by the Congressional resolution of May 15, 1776, popular feeling inspired a meeting in Philadelphia. Here a resolution was

<sup>14.</sup> The Constitution of Pennsylvania, p. 13.

<sup>15.</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>16.</sup> Journal of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1782), I, 89-90.

<sup>17.</sup> Journals of the Continental Congress, W. C. Ford, ed. (Washington D. C., 1996), IV, 357-358.

<sup>18.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, May 22, 1776.

adopted to call a convention "to be chosen by the people" to carry out the resolves of Congress, and a Provincial Conference to formulate a plan for a convention to frame a new government.<sup>19</sup>

This meeting of May 15th resulted in a meeting of county delegates in Philadelphia a month later on June 18th, with Thomas McKean as President. This body laid the groundwork for the convention to meet July 15th, and set July 18th as the date for electing delegates who were to number eight from each county and the City of Philadelphia. They adjourned June 25, 1776 after resolving that a Provincial Convention be called to form a new government for the Colony based upon "the authority of the people only", and setting forth the qualifications for the electors of delegates. These were to be all "associators", twenty-one years of age who had lived one year in the Province, and who had at any time paid a county or provincial tax or had been rated or assessed for the same. It was also specified that all who were qualified by law to vote for representatives in the Assembly could vote upon taking an oath not to oppose "the establishment of a free government in this Province by the convention now to be chosen".<sup>20</sup>

The Assembly of Pennsylvania now stated that it, too, was desirous of carrying into execution the resolutions of Congress, but that they lacked a **querum** of the House, and thus were unable to proceed on the question of ferming a State government.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20.</sup> Pennsylvania Archives (Harrisburg, 1876), III, 640.

<sup>21.</sup> Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Province of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1776), VI, 741.

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The arrangements made by the convention in June were carried out, the officers of the election chosen, and the election held on June 8th. The assemblying of delegates took place on July 16th and moved by a oneness of purpose, namely, to establish a government of their own. This body took supreme control of the government, received communications from sister states, and dealt with Congress. It also renounced allegiance to the British Crown, declared faith in the Holy trinity, and pledged itself to establish and support a government founded upon the authority of the people.<sup>22</sup>

The finished document that this body drew up was acclaimed by many as a democratic document which secured the liberties of the people.<sup>23</sup> This is not surprising for now Pennsylvania had a government of her own; no one could now take away her liberties. British authority had been thrown off and Pennsylvania had its own government elected by its own people.

Yet, not all felt the Constitution was a cure for all ills; opposition to the Constitution scon appeared in thirty-two resolves which were drawn up and presented to the citizens at large in the State House yard. These resolves said the Constitution had been drawn up too rapidly and by a body which had assumed too much authority. The Council of Censors was the only provision for amending, which created too long a period of time to wait for the correction of defects. Haste had been associated too definitely with the entire work of the convention, ordering the Constitution printed on September 5th, then confirming

<sup>22.</sup> Journal of the House, I, 37.

<sup>23.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 9, 1776.

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it on the 16th, merely refining it in the later discussions. There was no opportunity, as they saw it, for the people to discuss the plan and voice their feelings. The Constitution violated the rights of freemen. Prescription of oaths and affirmation was inconsistent with the rights of man, and this program would cause a decided increase in the number of Tories. Electors were advised not to take the oath on November 5th, and the members of the new Assembly when chosen were advised to refuse taking it. It was declared that the Assembly should have the right of amendment. The people were told to elect no councilors on November 5th.<sup>24</sup>

When the Legislature, elected under the Constitution, met on November 28th, they were given instructions by the opponents of the Constitution as to what they regarded as truly democratic, and what they wished to see adopted. They regarded a change in the late form of government as unnecessary except to abolish the regal and proprietary power and put the executive in the hands of the people. The Assembly should ask for the adoption of such parts of the Constitution as secure annual elections, rotation in office, liberty of conscience, freedom of the press, and jury trial. They were to urge that judges hold commissions during good behavior, and that the frame of government be submitted to the people in a reasonable time.<sup>25</sup> The reasons for these proposals were undoubtedly designed to hold up operation of the new plan.

The early opponents of the Constitution were not numerous. Whether this was because of the war, which took the interests of men,

24. Pennsylvania Gasette, October 23, 1776.

<sup>25.</sup> Broadsides (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1776) II, 205.

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is impossible to say. In 1776, the opponents of the Constitution cried out in opposition as they felt the Constitution was not too democratic. Furthermore, they believed it was drawn up too hastily and without the knowledge of the people.<sup>26</sup>

But as the war went on, the people, being faced with depreciation of money, disorganisation of business and farm life, arrests of citisens as Tories, confiscation of property, fines, imprisonments, issues of paper money, and noticeable lack of experienced men in the government, found much opportunity for criticism and apprehension.

Defects were seen and suggestions as to remedies were offered from time to time, but many who acknowledged the existence of these defects were hesitant about changes. The Assembly did respond to public elamor by passing a resolution on June 12, 1777, to ascertain the wishes of the people in regard to the calling of a convention,<sup>27</sup> but incidents of the war prevented the contemplated action. The next year, on November 28th, a resolution was passed to give the people an oppertunity to vote on the question the first Tuesday in April, 1799. They gave the many petitions presented as the reason for this poll of public opinion "for a convention" or "against a convention". Specified, as a point to be considered by such a convention were it called, was the question of discontinuance of the Council of Censors.<sup>28</sup>

Public opposition to a convention for changing the Constitution was pronounced. Petitions flooded in opposing a convention to change the Constitution.<sup>29</sup> There was a decided feeling that change in the midst of confusion which did prevail would only add still more to the

<sup>26.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, October 16, 1776.

<sup>27.</sup> Journal of the House, I, 142.

<sup>28.</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-247.

<sup>29.</sup> Pennsylvania Archives, (Harrisburg, 1876), III, 344-379.

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uncertainty of the times. This was the overwhelming reason for the peoples' action. The war was foremost in their minds and they felt the time for change was not immediate.

Up to now the opposition had achieved no organisation. The opposition had stemmed from a few who feared tyranny would come in when the people were occupied with the war. 50

But by March, 1779, the opposition had achieved organisation. They were formed of different sects, different occupations, and different interests in life. They united with the avowed purpose of upholding "The True Liberty and Happiness of Pennsylvania", maintaining that since their members opposed tyranny from a foreign power, it was their duty to oppose tyranny at home. They directed their attacks at the Constitution of the State, working towards its revision.<sup>31</sup> Thomas Fitzsimons, George Clymer, James Wilson, Benjamin Rush, Robert Morris, and Thomas Mifflin were among the eighty-one members who made a detailed appeal to the public in March, 1779. Later these same men were to be the principal advocates of the Federal Constitution.

The published petition was a statement of their attitude and a warning to the people. Refuting the contention that opposition to the Constitution came only from Tories, and denouncing the accusation that they were moved by ambition, love of office, and power, they observed that some of their members had refused the highest offices in the state. They voiced the objections that the legislature had but one house with no check or drawback, the position of judges was too insecure, and the Council of Censore was indeed a novelty -- a novelty

 <sup>30.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 30, 1776.
Sl. Pennsylvania Packet, March 24, 1779.

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which should be done away with as it possessed tyrannous power. Lastly, they denounsed the requiring of the oath to the Constitution as the "most daring invasion upon the inherent, inalienable and indefeasible right of every freeman to judge and act for himself". They denounced this because it was not only asked of officials, but of all the citizens of Pennsylvania. The petition closed with a criticism of the framers of the Constitution and its supporters as being not even a tenth of the population.<sup>52</sup>

With the advent of this petition, the Republicans, or opponents of the State Constitution were formed. The Republicans were eventually to become the supporters of the Federal Constitution, while the Constitutionalists, who were the supporters of the State Constitution, were to become the Anti-Federalists, or opponents of the Federal Constitution.

With the formation of these parties in Pennsylvania, the people gradually drew into one or the other. This movement of the people towards Republicanism or Constitutionalism is difficult to trace because at times the party lines were difficult to distinguish. New questions often caused changes in alignment: discussions of aliens, money, state debts, taxes, Tories, the test law and combined with sectionalism could be and were used to stimulate feelings at every opportunity. They were brought to the public attention whenever, and in whatever way offered.

The movement of the people towards Republicanism or Constitutionalism was not noticeable until 1785. Prior to that time, the parties were loosely constructed with ill defined ideals. For the most part their

32. Pennsylvania Packet, March 24, 1779.

program centered around the State Constitution, and principally around the Council of Censors.

The Council of Censors was to be chosen every seven years; it was made up of delegates chosen on the basis of equal representation, two persons from each city and county. This body was to exercise almost supreme power for the space of one year from the date of their election, and no longer.<sup>33</sup> They were to have the power to call a convention to meet within two years after their sitting, if there appeared to them an absolute necessity of amending an article of the Constitution which might be defective. The Council was to explain such parts as might be thought not clearly expressed, and add such as were necessary for the preservation of the rights and happiness of the people.

The Council of Censors had been ordained and established as a definite legal check upon legislative and executive departments and the sole agent through which the Constitution could be altered or amended.

Meeting November 10-12, 1783, the Council included William Findley and John Smiley, recognized Constitutionalist leaders from the western county of Westmoreland. The Constitutionalist group also included nine others representing counties all over the state. They were twelve Anti-Constitutionalists represented in the Council from counties all over the state.<sup>34</sup>

The Anti-Constitutionalists, or Republicans, showed their political feelings and beliefs on the State Constitution in a committee report.

<sup>55.</sup> The Constitution of Pennsylvania, pp. 31-32.

<sup>34.</sup> Journal of the Council of Censors (Philadelphia, 1783), 3-4. Hereafter cited Journal of Censors.

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They felt that a one-house legislature was wrong. They felt a faction might gain control and rule for their own ends. The uncontrolled power of the legislature would cause them to usurp judicial and executive authority. Only revolution then remained to the people.<sup>35</sup>

The second part of the report contended that the supreme executive power which was delegated to a Council was wrong: first, consistent sitting of the Council was expensive; second, a numerous body did not possess decision for action in emergencies; third, no individual was accountable; fourth, a single man would not do what one might persuade the group to do because of their numbers; fifth, election of the President by joint ballot of the Council and Assembly allowed a faction in the Assembly to control the Council, and did not establish accountability for excess authority.<sup>36</sup>

The following section of the report was given over to rotation of office which the Republicans or Anti-Constitutionalists felt to be improvident. They felt first that hope of re-appointment was always a strong incentive to work, but at present a man could not be re-elected to the same office. Second, the state was deprived of the experience these men had gained and was compelled to train new men. Third, it did not serve as a check to ambition because a man might get another office. Fourth, by this provision, people at elections were often kept from choosing men they preferred.<sup>37</sup>

The Republicans proposed a two-house legislature, a single executive, military training for freemen under the direction of the General Assembly, and omission of the part of the Constitution dealing

<sup>35.</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>36.</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>37.</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

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with rotation of office. They proposed that judges of the Supreme Court and Common Pleas should have fixed salaries, and hold office during good behavior. A judge might be removed were two-thirds of each house to ask it of the Governer. 38

All of these Republican proposals were very similar to what was later incorporated in the Federal Constitution -- balance of power, a strong executive, and a more stable position for judges. It is not surprising that the Republicans were to become the supportors of the Federal Constitution four years later.

The Republican proposals were voiced with a belief that the geverament had visible weaknesses which needed correction. Their proposals were not undemocratic as was later charged by the Constitutionalists. Instead, the proposals were voiced with the intent of improving the government and the role of the people in it. Thus a single executive who could be held accountable to the people was proposed, and a check and balance system which they believed would suppress tyranny and control the legislature. All in all, the Republicans believed in democracy, and they felt their proposals would aid in assuring the state and its people that it could be attained.

These Republican proposals stirred up party feeling. The Constitutionalists from now on became avid supportors of the State Constitution looking upon all proposals to amend or change the Constitution as undemocratic and as an effort to establish aristocracy. They felt special interests were attempting to control the government.<sup>39</sup> From 1784 on, this was the Constitutionalist cry.

<sup>58. &</sup>lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 70. 59. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 73-75.

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Moreover, the Constitutionalists reminded the Republicans that their proposals needed a two-thirds vote of the Censors to change the Constitution. This meant eighteen votes were needed, but the Republicans could only muster twelve. Thus subsequent action to call a convention to prepare a new Constitution based upon the Republican suggestions was out of the question and the Republican proposal went for mought.

The Republicans, however, carried their beliefs to the people saying their proposals were neither new or unusual and that the time had come for a change in the Constitution. They said that the majority of the Censors wished a change as the people did. They said the minority gave no logical reason for their opposition to a change. Furthermore, this minority represented only one-third of the people whereas the Republicans represented two-thirds of the people.<sup>40</sup>

The Constitutionalists answered with charges that the Republicans were attempting to usurp power by calling a convention to draft a new Constitution. Furthermore, they added that the Republican proposals were aristocratic, favoring domination by a few over the many.<sup>41</sup>

There is no evidence to support these two Constitutionalist charges. The Republicans did not attempt to have a convention called, nor did they favor government by the few;<sup>42</sup> their proposals showed no such tendency or belief.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, from now on it became increasingly evident that the Republicans were backed by the majority of the people. This will become more evident as this study progresses further. At

<sup>40.</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-79.

<sup>41.</sup> Tbid.

<sup>42.</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>45.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, January 27, 1784.

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this time (1784) there was no concrete evidence demonstrating where the people stood although the Republicans claimed two-thirds of the people were for them.

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## Chapter Two

## Economic Conflicts in Pennsylvania

Not only were the people of Pennsylvania divided over questions involving the State Constitution of 1776, but they were also divided over economic policies to be pursued by the state. These included such items as the Bank of North America, the issuing of paper money, and the state of trade and economic well-being in the state. Economic conflicts were to play a major role in the move for a federal constitution. Unlike the constitutional issues, however, economic problems did not take definite shape until the war was over in 1785.

One of the major economic conflicts involved a charter for the Bank of North America. This Bank was originally chartered by the Congress of the United States in May, 1781. The Constitutionalists had leveled the charge that the bank was an instrument of the commercial group and foreigners, and that it smacked of "Toryism". This charge Was accepted in the back counties, and by 1784 the frontier region of Pennsylvania was orying out against the bank.<sup>1</sup> As a result, an act repealing the charter of the bank was passed in the Assembly on April 4, 1785.<sup>2</sup>

Repeal of the Bank Charter was summary action and produced protests until the action was reversed on March 17, 1787. Protests immediately were presented to the Assembly saying that Congress had established the Bank of North America, many had bought its stock, and with no real charges its State Charter had been repealed by arbitrary

<sup>1.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, February 7, 1784.

<sup>2. &</sup>lt;u>Minutes of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania</u> (Philadelphia, 1785), pp. 285-286. Hereafter cited as <u>Minutes of the Assembly</u>.

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dictum, setting a bad precedent. All laws passed in "violation of the common sense of the people" were inconsistent with the Bill of Rights and abused the trust which the Constitution had lodged in the single branch of the legislature. This action threatened all corporate bodies. Those who formed the bank maintained that a body created could not be annihilated on grounds of "mere caprice, personal considerations, or partial policy". Since the institution was recommended by Congress it was, to say the least, a breach of decorum not to consult Congress now before taking such drastic action.<sup>5</sup>

By December, 1785, the public clamor was so great against the repeal of the Bank Charter that a committee was appointed on March 15, 1786, to consider the bank repeal bill.<sup>4</sup> Here we glimpse for the first time a definite swing towards the Republicans. The public was convinced that the Constitutionalists had acted without proof that the bank was Tory in nature and favored a few rich. But the primary factor which swung the people to the Republicans was the hush-up tactics used by The Constitutionalists. The latter would not hear the President or the Directors of the bank, nor would they listen to the people whose property was affected by the passing of the bill. Moreover, a cautious and careful investigation regarding repeal of the charter was done sway with by the Constitutionalists. All of this led the people to believe that the Constitutionalist charges were ill-founded and not true.<sup>5</sup>

The committee, which was appointed to investigate the repeal bill, applied to Mr. Whitehill and Mr. Smiley as they were of the committee

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, October 5, 1785.

<sup>4.</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, 1786, pp. 245-248.

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, December 28, 1785; Minutes of the Assembly, 1785, pp. 184-188.

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<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, December 28, 1785; Minutes of the Assembly, 1785, pp. 184-188.

which originally was to inquire into the charter. It was the report of these two Constitutionalists that served as the basis of the repeal act. Now the two were asked the nature of their inquiries which led to their report. It was found that they never had called at the bank to learn the nature of its business. Four of the men signing the petition against the bank were then called and they, too, had not visited the bank to gain information. The president of the bank was then questioned and he reported that no one called, although anyone was welcome to do so. The investigating committee felt that "It will follow from this relation, that the report made to the late House, was grounded in general notions preconceived, or on the current popular opinions and speculations, without much consideration being bestowed on the special subject, and the same may at least be said of the petition presented against the bank". The committee in the report further stated that the proceeding of the late House had the "marks of precipatancy, prejudice and partiality, the annulling act has its foundation deeply laid in injustice, and remains a reproach both to the government, and to the people. But your committee, trusting to the wisdom and probity of the present House, to restore to the state its lost honour, submit. . . a resolution that a special committee be appointed to draw up a bill to repeal the repeal act and another to prevent and punish. . . " the counterfeiting of the common seal, bank bills and bank notes of the president, directors and company of the Bank of North America.<sup>6</sup>

The report of the committee on memorials, praying a repeal of the law to annul the bank charter, was rejected by a vote of twenty-

6. Minutes of the Assembly, 1786, pp. 245-248.

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seven yeas to forty-one mays. Prominent among those defeating the proposal of the committee were the two Constitutionalists, Robert Whitehill and William Findley. The Constitutionalists, who always claimed to be friends of democracy and the common people, failed to prove their point here. From this time on their aforementioned cry seemed to be a smoke screen behind which they operated.

But this defeat failed to deter the Republicans and after repeated petitions and attempts to annul the repeat bill they finally succeeded on March 17, 1787.<sup>7</sup> The people wanted the benefits of a successful trade, and strict observance of the Constitution. They believed the bank gave them economic peace and security. This is what the people were crying for, and what they felt the bank would give them. Benjamin Franklin tells us that a minority, undoubtedly meaning the Constitutionalists, "opposed the bank because of envy and because they feared the banks influence prevented further emissions of paper money". But Franklin felt "the bank withstood all attacks, and went on well, notwithstanding that the Assembly repeated its Charter. A new Assembly has restored it, and the management is so prudent that I have no doubt of its continuing to go on well".<sup>8</sup> Franklin voiced the sentiments of the Republicans and the majority of people on the bank issue and the issue of paper money.

After 1785, paper money became a second major issue in the Keystone State, an issue which also involved trade and economic prosperity in general. Up to 1785 the people had looked with friendly eyes on

<sup>7.</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, 1787, p. 164.

<sup>8.</sup> Benjamin Franklin, The Works of Benjamin Franklin, John Bigelow, ed., 12 vols. (New York, 1904), XI, pp. 331-332. Hereafter cited Franklin, Works.

paper money. "Paper money has served us well, gold and silver money is like a highway carrying produce to the market without itself creating nothing," said the Pennsylvania Gazette. By creating paper to substitute for gold and silver, a country is given constructive stock in replace of dead stock".<sup>9</sup> Said Benjamin Franklin: "Paper money in moderate quantities has been found beneficial; when more than occasions of commerce require. it depreciated and was michevious: and the populace are apt to demand more than is necessary. In this state we have some, and it is useful, and I do not hear any elamor for more."10 But Franklin forgot to say that there was clamor for less.

The clamor for less paper money arose after the passage, by the Constitutionalists, of the general funding measure on March 16, 1785. This measure secured the issuance of paper money in Pennsylvania. Not long after the passage of this act, merchants began to cry out that the market was being flooded, that prices would fall, and that depreciation would drag Pennsylvania into the gutter of depravity. They felt this act further increased the issuance of paper money to the breaking point; that is, paper money would become practically worthless. For this reason some merchants refused to accept paper for payment.<sup>12</sup> Franklin said, "People were justly averse to an increase of the quantity at this time, there being a great deal of real money in the country, and one bank in good credit".13

<sup>9. &</sup>lt;u>Pennsylvania Gazette</u>, September 7, 1785. 10. Franklin, Works, XI, p. 313.

<sup>11.</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, 1785, p. 212.

<sup>12.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, September 7, 1785.

<sup>13.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, p. 310.

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<sup>10.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, p. 313.

<sup>11.</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, 1785, p. 212.

<sup>12.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, September 7, 1785.

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But Franklin did not believe that paper money was ruining the country as he went on to say that paper money was not a legal tender and could do no injustice to anybody, not did anyone there complain of it.<sup>14</sup> He added that the merchants' ory was because of the fact that "there were too many traders, who are crowded hither from all parts of Europe with more goods than the natural demand of the country requires".<sup>15</sup> The merchants' attacks on paper money as causing "shipe to rot in the harbor, mechanics to be out of work, and everyone mistrusting one another because of the lack of stability and good faith in the paper currency"<sup>16</sup> was grossly exaggerated.

If Franklin was any authority, the country was not in the economic doldrums, but on the contrary was quite prosperous. Time and again he declared that America and Pennsylvania in 1785, '86, and '87 "prospers with the farmers who form the bulk of the mation having plentiful erops and selling them at high prices and for ready, hard money. Working people are all employed and get high wages, are well fed and well clad. Our estates in houses are trebled in value by the rising of the rents since the Revolution. Building in Philadelphia increase amazingly, besides small towns rising in every quarter of the country. The laws govern, justice is well administered, and property as secure as in any country on the globe. Our wilderness lands are daily bought up by new settlers, and our settlements extend rapidly to the westward. European goods were never so cheaply afforded us since Britain no longer has the monopoly of supplying us. In short, all among us may be happy dispositions".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15.</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-212.

<sup>16.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, October 10, 1787.

<sup>17.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, pp. 289-290.

But not all had happy dispositions as complaints of paper money continued to trickle in. Some said only the lasy and shiftless, the speculator and the bankrupt of which there were a few, wanted paper money.<sup>18</sup> This was true only in part. There were accusations that these people wanted paper money to depreciate so they could contract a debt, and then pay it off with depreciated currency. If such people wanted this and cried for it, they did not obtain their wishes. What was surprising, however, was the fact that the Constitutionalists defended these people against those who desired a limited paper currency and a sound stable currency calling these latter Tories, aristocrats, and so on.<sup>19</sup> Thus in regards to paper money, both the Constitutionalists and Republicans went to extremes. The Republicans feared what might happen with further emissions of paper money, not what was happening. The Constitutionalists took up the cry for further emissions to aid the distressed of which there were few and these few were well taken care of according to Franklin.<sup>20</sup> They also took up the cry for more paper money as their opponents, the Republicans, had taken the opposite ory. The Constitutionalists opposed the Republicans by saying the Republicans were aristocrats who favored hard money while the Constitutionalists were democratic as they favored the downtrodden. The Constitutionalists hoped they would win friends by making it look like they were the defenders of the liberties so recently won. This actually was the procedure of the Constitutionalists but it fooled no one. Franklin said that both parties were democratic,

Pennsylvania Gazette, October 3, 1787.
Pennsylvania Gazette, October 17, 1787.

<sup>20.</sup> Franklin, Works, II, p. 290.

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<sup>18.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, October 3, 1787.

<sup>19.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 17, 1787.

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striving for the pursuit of liberty for the people as "both feel the same towards the Revolution and its principles. Both sides celebrate July 4th with enthusiasm, though they think differently on particular regulations".<sup>21</sup> Thus for either side to accuse the other of leaning toward aristocracy and tyranny was more propaganda than truth. But each side was to do so increasingly from 1785 onwards.

There were good grounds for the Republicans desiring a stable and sound currency as the thirteen states in 1785 were flooded with myriad types of currency, including moidores, doubloons, pistoles, English and French crowns, and Spanish dollars. With these various currencies circulating at the same time, business and commercial transactions were often difficult. Counterfeiting was also common and a wary trader took as much time for testing his money as selling his goods.<sup>22</sup> The Republicans saw the need of a uniform stable currency such as only a strong federal government could enact. Thus they began to think in terms of a stronger federal government while the Constitutionalists' increasingly became more enthusiastic for retaining the Article of Confederation and the present State Constitution. From 1785 on, it became more and more evident that the Constitutionalists' political philosophy was States Rights while the Republicans thought in terms of a more powerful federal government. These two political tendencies displayed themselves increasingly from 1785 on.

Although Franklin denied that the country was faced with ruin, both he and others believed that a stronger central government was essential. "America is not filled with distresses of anarchy, con-

<sup>21.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, pp. 319-320.

<sup>22.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 5, 1785.

fusion, or distress nor has it been since the split with Britain," he declared.<sup>23</sup> Though America was far from being in dire straits, it was widely felt, according to Franklin, that a stronger federal congress was needed. During the winter of 1786, Congress could only assemble seven or eight states so that a treaty with Portugal remained unratified. This meant to Franklin that the Federal Congress could well do with further powers.<sup>24</sup> It meant to many people, namely the Republicans, that federal power needed strengthening.<sup>25</sup>

The papers of Pennsylvania by 1786 give one the distinct impression that the people increasingly desired a stronger federal government,<sup>26</sup> though the papers making these charges were sympathetic to the Republicans, their charges seem to carry truth. Benjamin Franklin, writing to Jefferson in March, 1786, said "it grows clearer everyday that Congress needs further powers, and as the people grow more enlightened they see the need of giving Congress more powers".<sup>27</sup> Thus it is clear that on the issues of paper money, foreign trade, and the need of a stronger central government the majority of the people were behind the Republicans in Pennsylvania by 1786.

<sup>23.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, p. 290.

<sup>24.</sup> Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>25.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, November 4, 1786.

<sup>26.</sup> Ibid., November 11, 1786.

<sup>27.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, pp. 243-244.

## Chapter Three

## National, Sectional, and Class Divisions in Pennsylvania

Other factors in Pennsylvania, in addition to the constitutional and economic, entered strongly into the Pennsylvania background of the Federal Constitution. Who were these people who lined up with the Republicans in their quest for a stronger central government? Where were they located? How large a segment were they? Were they the rich or the well-to-do? That is the subject to which we now turn.

People representing the Republican point of view lived in the central and eastern sections of the state and were primarily of German and English descent. Both the Germans and the English settled in the eastern and central sections. One could find very few of either further west.<sup>1</sup>

The English were the more active of the two politically, primarily because they were among the first to develop the political divisions of Chester, Philadelphia and Bucks Counties together with the City of Philadelphia in eastern Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> They were a diversified group engaging in myriad fields of activity, including farming, manufacturing, trading, merchandising, and the various artisan activities. But one fact stood out above all others about the English and that was their ownership of land. Whatever their field of activity, most of them owned land and real estate.<sup>3</sup>

The English composed over one-third of the population of Pennsylvania and they were undoubtedly the most influential in the political

<sup>1.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, September 22, 1784.

<sup>2.</sup> Wayland F. Dunaway, A History of Pennsylvania (New York, 1948) pp. 78-75.

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, August 24, 1785.

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scene due to their numbers which enabled them to control the General Assembly as they had the larger share of representatives. Here again we can see they owned land as Benjamin Franklin said, "the majority of our legislators represent those who own and cultivate land".<sup>4</sup> That this is true one must only examine the General Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1787 where out of sixty-nine members, sixty-two represented agricultural interests and only seven represented commercial interests.<sup>5</sup> There can be no doubt that the English, comprising over one-third of the General Assembly, were landowners and were representatives of landowners.

Not only the English, but the Germans, who comprised almost onethird of the state's population, were landowners. The papers and writings of the day emphasised (probably over-emphasised) the honesty and frugality of the land-owning Germans.<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly, the majority of Germans were honest, hard working and frugal. For the most part, the Germans formed a respectable part of Pennsylvania though in politics they were under represented because of their language and customs to which they tenaciously clung.<sup>7</sup>

One cannot overemphasize the fact that the Germans and the English were first of all landowners. Benjamin Franklin said, "Farmers form a majority of our population being one hundred to one over artisans",<sup>8</sup> and besides being farmers "they generally were proprietors of the land they cultivated".<sup>9</sup> Being landowners they also possessed the vote as this paper has earlier cited, and being possessors of the vote this society was definitely a democratic, freedom loving society,

<sup>4.</sup> Franklin, Writings, X, 330.

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, January 16, 1788.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid., August 31, 1785.

<sup>7.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8.</sup> Franklin, Works, I, 271.

<sup>9.</sup> Ibid., 394-395.

ruled, according to Franklin, by laws, not tyrants.<sup>10</sup> Franklin continually wrote of the freedom lowing, democratic society where there were few rich and few poor, the majority being landowners who acquired land through hard work and frugality.<sup>11</sup>

But why were the English and Germans Republicans by 1785 and 1786 where earlier they were neither Republicans nor Constitutionalists but rather independent voters who voted for the one whose policy at the time was closest to their feelings?<sup>12</sup>

The answers are many and various, no one factor answers the question entirely, but united they form the reasons for the swing of the Germans and English, who formed over two-thirds of the population of Pennsylvania, to the Republicans. First, they believed further emissions of paper money would wreck the economic stability of the state as paper would depreciate and would only aid the speculator, the lazy, and the dishonest. The Constitutionists being advocates of the general funding measure were looked upon as destroyers of public faith and aides of the aforementioned people. The Germans and English, being landowners and producers, liked and received hard money for their goods.<sup>15</sup> Further emissions of paper money they feared would drive hard money off the market, which accounts for their opposition to the Constitutionalists on this point.

Other measures for the swing to the Republicans were not because of direct opposition to the Constitutionalists, but rather because of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. Benjamin Franklin said that by 1786 there was a decided feeling that "the Articles of

- 11. Ibid.
- 12. Pennsylvania Packet, October 1, 1784.
- 15. Franklin, Works, XI, 289-90.

<sup>10.</sup> Ibid., 396-401.

Confederation were generally blamed as not having given sufficient powers to Congress, the federal head". 14 The papers carried cries of many who desired a stronger government which could put forth a united and stable currency, ratify treaties of commerce, unite the states in arms, and so on. All in all many further felt that unity among the thirteen states was desirable as at present all thirteen states went their own separate ways.<sup>15</sup> There was the statement that this feeling grew immensely after destitution ran rempant in Rhode Island where paper money was worthless.<sup>16</sup> and after Congress failed to get the states together in 1786 to ratify a commercial treaty with Portugal.<sup>17</sup> With the Republicans advocating a two-house legislature in Pennsylvania instead of the one then in existence which satisfied the Constitutionalists, and with the growing desire on the part of the Republicans to enhance the power of the federal government,<sup>18</sup> the Germans and English went along with the Republicans. Thus by 1787, the claims that two-thirds of the population desired a stronger federal government does not seem far from the truth.

The Constitutionalists, with the growing desire for a stronger federal government becoming evident to them, began to ery out for the preservation of liberty through state government. In other words, they felt that only a weak central government and strong local or state government could insure the people against tyranny.<sup>19</sup> Although they

<sup>14.</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>15.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, September 30, 1786.

<sup>16.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 24, 1787.

<sup>17.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, 243-244.

<sup>18.</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>19.</sup> Pennsylvania Herald, October 11, 1786.

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made few inroads with this cry on the Germans and English, the Scotch-Irish, living in the hinterland of Pennsylvania, were appealed to and won over. By 1785 and 1786 it was clear that the western sections of the state were Constitutionalists. The reasons for this, as for the position of the Germans and English, were many and varied. Let us now proceed to the task of seeing why the west was Constitutionalist in its sympathies.

It must be remembered that certain unproven prejudices rested in the minds of the people living in the back counties. These unproven prejudices were natural in that the westerners were far away from the political scene in Philadelphia. Furthermore, the west had the minority of population in Pennsylvania and thus the minority of representative in the Assembly. These two factors combined in the westerners' mind to form a prejudice against and a distrust of the easterner and his representatives in the Assembly.<sup>20</sup> Even Franklin said that the farmer often distrusted those living in cities, for the farmers, being self-sufficient, could see no need of the activities of city dwellers.<sup>21</sup> Thus these prejudices were natural, though as is the case with many prejudices facts play an insignificant, if not an altogether absentee role.

The Constitutionalists recognized these prejudices and as early as 1785 they concentrated on the west to obtain approval for the general funding measure. In 1785 it was noticed that the west was solidly behind the general funding measure, but more than that they

<sup>20.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, August 31, 1785.

<sup>21.</sup> Franklin, Works, X, 375-376.

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acquired the belief that the east was aristocratic, desiring hard money for their own benefit.<sup>22</sup> From this measure onward, the west was deluged with Constitutionalist literature so that by 1787 the west opposed all Republican beliefs, and accepted those of the Constitutionalists, namely a desire for more paper money, maintaining a one-house legislature in the state, and a desire to keep the present federal government under the Articles of Confederation.<sup>23</sup>

It must not be presumed that the westerners were Constitutionalist because they were a different class than their neighbors in the east. As in the east, the west also was settled principally by the farmers.<sup>24</sup> They also owned and cultivated their own lands, abundant crops coming from rich, black soil provided a good living for those living in the back country.<sup>25</sup> Henry Brackenridge, living in Pittsburgh and the editor of the <u>Pittsburgh Gazette</u>, noted that the west was inhabited by land-owning farmers who possessed a good means of living.<sup>26</sup> Farming, of course, was not the only means of living in the west for manufacturing, especially pig iron, distilling, making paper and other items were prominent in the west.<sup>27</sup> But by far the west was, like the east, composed of land-owning farmers. Thus their opposition to their meighbor in the east stemmed not from being of a different class, but because of the two aforementioned reasons--smaller representation.

<sup>22.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 12, 1785.

<sup>23.</sup> Pennsylvania Eerald, October 7, 1736.

<sup>24.</sup> Joseph Scott, The U. 8. Gazetser (Philadelphia, 1755).

<sup>25.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26.</sup> Pitteburgh Gazette, Cotober 27, 1737.

<sup>27.</sup> Joseph Scott, The U. S. Gazeteer (Philadelphia, 1755). Eate, gunpowder, forges, rolling and splitting mills, copper, tin, leaver, kitchen utensils, furniture and so forth.

By the spring of 1787, the two parties were well formed; the Constitutionalists possessing power in the west, while the Republicans possessed power in the east. Folitical beliefs of the two parties were in the molding stage, not fully developed. This was to come about in September, 1787, when the proposed Federal Constitution entered upon the scene for approval or rejection. Then it became evident that the Constitutionalists were States Rightists and the Republicans were advocates of a strong central government. Though these philosophies were noticeable in previous years, it took the Federal Constitution to make them complete, whereby all decisions and thinking of the two resulted from these two philosophies which were molded completely by the entrance of the Federal Constitution into Pennsylvania in 1787.

Benjamin Franklin tells us that by the spring of 1787 a general feeling ran throughout the thirteen states that a federal convention should be called to revise the Articles of Confederation and to propose a new government.<sup>28</sup> Virginia first proposed such a plan and Congress recommended that a convention be called in May, 1787.<sup>29</sup> Franklin noted further that "there was little thought by particular states to mend their particular Constitution, only a general feeling that the Articles of Confederation should be revised and a new government proposed".<sup>30</sup>

The Federal Convention met in Philadelphia in May, 1787, to revise the Articles and to propose a new government. The delegates,

- 28. Franklin, Works, XI, 313.
- 29. Ibid., p. 323.
- 30. Ibid., p. 313.

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- 29. Ibid., p. 323.
- 50. Ibid., p. 513.

<sup>28.</sup> Franklin, Norks, XI, 313.

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according to Franklin, were men of character, prudence and ability.<sup>31</sup> Delegates from Pennsylvania came from the east and represented Republican views, but this was so because the Constitutionalists, representing principally in the west, refused to send delegates claiming it would cost the state too much money as delegates would have to travel the length of the state to Philadelphia. Thus, the Constitutionalists were agreeable that the delegates should come from the east.<sup>32</sup>

During the months the Federal Convention met, from May to September 17, 1787, Pennsylvania was quiet. Pennsylvania was waiting to see what would come out of the Convention before beginning the fight in earnest. It was said that during these months an Anti-Federal junto, consisting of five members, formed in Philadelphia with the sole purpose of opposing any proposals of the Federal Convention.<sup>33</sup> This junto was composed of Constitutionalists who resolved "that if the proposals of the Convention interfered with the Constitution of Pennsylvania, it should be opposed and rejected".<sup>34</sup> Their principal emphasis was on protecting the State Constitution against changes. Whether they formed to oppose all measures of the Convention is doubtful, but it is not doubtful that they formed to protect their Constitution from alterations and if this meant opposing the proposals of the Convention, that is what they would do.

Thus, during these intervening months, from May to September, a small Constitutionalist minority had formed to protect the State Constitution. The Republicans waited for the proposals to be announced

**<sup>31.</sup>** Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>32.</sup> Pennsylvania Packet, October 8, 1787.

<sup>33.</sup> Independent Gazeteer, October 15, 1787.

<sup>34.</sup> Ibid.

before jumping one way or another. Pennsylvania during these days of the Federal Convention was quiet in anticipation of what would come out of the Convention. When in September, 1787, Pennsylvania learned what the Convention had done and what its proposals were, the fight between the Constitutionalists and Republicans began in earnest. It took the Federal Constitution to bring the two forces out in full fight, and both parties began concrete attempts at consolidating this strength, hoping to win the fight in the ratifying convention by securing enough delegates to approve or reject the Constitution.

To sum up at this time, it must be remembered that both parties were composed, primarily, of agricultural interests; the fight over the Constitution was not a contest between classes, but rather a fight between two political theories, namely, States Rights versus Strong Central Government. This was the issue around which each party revolved, the two parties differed only in political philosophy, not in economic classes. As the Constitution comes upon the scene, both parties indulged in careless and unproven charges which cloud the issue.

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## Chapter Four

### The Federal Constitution and Pennsylvania, 1787

The Federal Constitution was about to enter the political scene of Pennsylvania. Up to the time it entered (September 17, 1787), Pennsylvania had seen the emergence of two political parties; the Constitutionalists, whose emphasis lay in protecting the State Constitution, and the Republicans, whose emphasis lay in changing undemocratic features of the State Constitution and upon strengthening the federal government.

In this chapter we will see the culmination of these two political theories over the issue of the Federal Constitution. We shall see that the Republicans were the stronger in number, but the Constitutionalists were the more active in gaining support, especially in the back counties. The latter also attempted to create the impression that the Republicans represented the wealthy whose interests hurt the back-woods farmer. The Republicans were confident of victory in ratifying the Constitution and neglected to fight these charges in the west. Important also was the way the two parties fought to control the ratifying convention and the reasons why various people and sections voted for different delegates.

After the Federal Convention at Philadelphia agreed on the form of the Constitution, it was resolved that the Constitution should be laid before the Confederation Congress prior to its submission to conventions of delegates chosen in each state by the people under the recommendation of its legislature. Nine states were necessary for ratification; each state upon ratifying the Constitution should give notice to the United States in Congress assembled. If and when nine states should ratify,

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Congress was to fix a day on which electors should be appointed by the ratifying states to assemble and vote for the President. Then Senators and Representatives were to be elected and the new government would begin its maiden voyage. This was resolved in the Federal Convention on September 17, 1787.<sup>1</sup>

On this same day a letter was read to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania signed by her delegates to the Federal Convention. The letter said the Constitution had been agreed upon by the Federal Convention and that the delegates would be ready to report to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania at any time on the Constitution. The General Assembly ordered the Constitution to be read to them at 11 e'clock on September 18, 1787. On September 18, 1787, at the appointed hour the Constitution was read in full to the General Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

The next few days in the General Assembly were quiet. The Constitution was not mentioned except for an order on September 24, 1787, to print 1,000 cepies of the Constitution in English and 500 copies in German to be distributed in the city of Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> On September 25, 1787, it was agreed in the General Assembly that 2,000 more copies in English and 1,000 in German be printed to be sent to the back counties of the state where no news of the Constitution had as yet been received.<sup>4</sup>

Between the days of September 17th and September 29th, the papers of Philadelphia printed the Constitution in context.<sup>5</sup> The Constitution was well received immediately in Philadelphia and surrounding counties. This can be seen in studying the proceedings of the General Assembly

<sup>1.</sup> Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, Thomas Lloyd, ed., 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1787), I, 62-64. Hereafter cited <u>Debates</u>.

<sup>2.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 3, 1787.

<sup>5.</sup> Debates, I, 84.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>5.</sup> Pennsylvania Gasette, September 27, 1787.

on the days following September 17, 1787. Petitions began to trickle in to the General Assembly on September 24th; from that date on a steady flow of petitions for quick adaptation of the Constitution came from residents of Philadelphia and surrounding areas. Germantown was the first to send in such a petition; Dublin and Oxford townships followed closely. Philadelphia and its immediate vicinity also forwarded such a petition.<sup>6</sup> This was the only activity in the General Assembly regarding the Constitution during these days following September 17, 1787.

The major issue in the Assembly at this time was not the Constitution but taxation. A list of counties with their back taxes was presented to the Assembly. It was evident that something was drastically wrong. In the year 1787, only the city and counties of Philadelphia, Berks, Fayette, and Montgomery had paid anything. The rest of the counties had not paid one farthing. The state had received 74,000 and the debts assumed by the state, such as salaries, interest and others, amounted annually to 240,000. Exclusive of 1787 there were 300,000 in outstanding debts. These results were so shocking that a committee was appointed to investigate the matter.<sup>7</sup>

The committee reported a few days later that the counties of York and Cumberland had debts amounting each to 50,000. The counties of Bedford, Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Franklin had made very slight payments.<sup>8</sup> These counties were western counties and the cause of lack of payment, according to Franklin, was "because of the difficulty of a collector travelling miles between farms and the individualistic

- 6. Debates, I, 85-100.
- 7. Ibid., pp. 69-72.
- 8. Ibid., p. 102.

nature of the farmer who often refused to pay taxes as he saw no need or benefit of them".<sup>9</sup> Franklin went on to add that direct taxes were necessary but the people as yet were opposed to direct taxes; they still remembered paying taxes to England and their prejudice was destroying all attempts to impose direct taxation. Franklin saw it would be years before the prejudice of the people on direct taxes could be removed. Meanwhile, indirect taxes, such as duties on imports and excises had been used.<sup>10</sup>

Franklin was right; the people were prejudiced against direct taxes, both in the east and west. It was more noticeable in the west as there it was practically impossible to collect them. With this prejudice to fight and with only two days left in the General Assembly, the committee's proposals came to maught.<sup>11</sup>

At this time the Constitutionalists, now commonly called Anti-Federalists or opponents of the Federal Constitution, were for stricter collection of taxes, by armies if necessary.<sup>12</sup> This was done for an obvious reason; to build up in the minds of the people the aristocratic nature of the Federalists, who would tramp on the poor and squeeze out their last farthing.<sup>13</sup> By building up this concept, it was hoped the people would swing to the Anti-Federalists, the protector of the poor and downtrodden. The Anti-Federalists forgot to mention, however, that they, as well as the Federalists, had voted in the General Assembly for stricter collection of taxes.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9.</sup> Franklin, Works, XI, 327.

<sup>10.</sup> Ibid., pp. 361-362.

<sup>11.</sup> Debates, I, 102.

<sup>12.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 3, 1787.

<sup>13.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14.</sup> Debates, I, 10-29.

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9. Franklin, Works, XI, 327.

- 10. Ibid., pp. 361-362.
- 11. Debates, I, 102.
- 12. Pennsylvania Gazette, October 3, 1787.
- 13. Ibid.
- 14. Debates, I, 10-29.

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For the first time it is plain that the Anti-Federalists indulged in deceit and trickery hoping to win converts to their cause. Pamphlets and speakers were sent into the west to conduct this campaign; there can be no doubt that they were successful in the west as travelers and men, such as High Brackenridge, living in the west reported that it was widely believed in the back counties that armies would be sent out to enforce collection if the Constitution was ratified; they firmly believed their lands would be lost and they would become paupers.<sup>15</sup> This was tricky propaganda; tricky in the fact that they were indulging in deceit, yet getting away with it.

It is evident that the lack of communication and long distances played a significant role as the back-woods farmer knew that the Anti-Federalists in the General Assembly had voted for stricter collection of taxes. It is small wonder that the back-woods farmers came to believe this propaganda as they knew no better and had no way to find out. Theirs was a hopeless dilemma where they had to believe what they heard or believe nothing.

Also stemming directly out of the taxation question was the question of suffrage. The State Constitution provided that to vote an elector had to pay taxes for the year.<sup>16</sup> The question was raised in the Assembly whether this provision was in effect. Evidence was brought in from all over the state where electors voted with no record showing they had paid taxes. The general feeling throughout the state was that a man did not lose his suffrage because the collector had not come around, or because lists of taxables were not made out by the assessors.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15.</sup> Pittsburg Gazette, October 17, 1787. Also Pennsylvania Gazette, October 10, 1787.

<sup>16.</sup> The Constitution of Pennsylvania, pp. 10-11.

<sup>17.</sup> Debates, I, 100-110.

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Again the Assembly had no success in solving the issue because of the lack of time, therefore nothing was done; the Assembly desired stronger enforcement but lacked time for taking adequate measures.

Both the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists saw the need for strictor enforcement of the suffrage law under the State Constitution and the need for stricter collection of taxes.<sup>18</sup> Yet the Anti-Federalists. according to travelers in the back counties, deluged the farmer with propaganda that the ratification of the Constitution would bring aristocrats into power who would enforce taxation and take away suffrage from many who could not pay taxes.<sup>19</sup> What a strange stand for the Anti-Federalists to take. They voted in the Assembly for stricter enforcement of taxes; moreover, they were the guardians of the State Constitution and the State Constitution was, undoubtedly, being broken. Despite their vote in the Assembly on these issues and their insistence on protecting the State Constitution from change, they bombarded the west with literature and stump speakers, saying the Federalists were aristocrats who wished to trod on the poor by making them pay taxes and by taking away their vote if their taxes were not paid.<sup>20</sup> This was deceit pure and simple; undoubtedly indulging in such a contradiction could only be employed in a district where news was poor, and thus the west came to believe these Anti-Federalist charges.<sup>21</sup> Hugh Brackenridge. writing in the Pittsburgh Gasette, gives us a picture of the west at this time by telling us that the people believed anything about the Constitution, especially that their long-fought struggle for liberties

<sup>18.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 10, 1787.

<sup>20.</sup> Pennsylvania Gazette, October 3, 1787.

<sup>21.</sup> Pittsburgh Gasette, October 17, 1787.

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would be lost. He added further that "very few had ever seen the Constitution yet they firmly believed it was an instrument of the devil".<sup>22</sup> It is clear from this account that the Anti-Federalists' propaganda was working in the west.

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22. Ibid.

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