

# The AntiFederalists Were Right

By Gary DeMar

ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1787 the Constitutional Convention officially ended. Copies of the Constitution were sent to the state legislatures. Delegates anticipated tough battles in the states over whether or not the Constitution ought to be ratified.

There was much that both proponents and opponents of the Constitution agreed upon. Power, whether in a monarchy or a republic, tended to corrupt whoever yielded it, and checks and balances were necessary to prevent the consolidation of power in any one man or group of men no matter how virtuous. They also agreed that direct democracy could be subverted through manipulation of the masses. While there was disagreement on various issues, all accepted the idea of representative government rather than direct rule from the people.

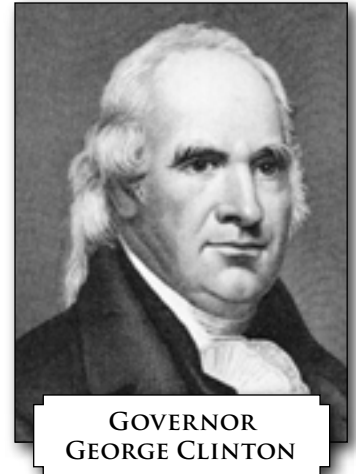


PATRICK HENRY IN THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

Many thoughtful and patriotic men like Patrick Henry opposed the Constitution, because they feared that the states would lose their sovereignty and power as legal governing entities. Henry also distrusted the office of the president which he thought “squints toward monarchy.” He also feared the potential for the abuse of power which would result by substituting taxation for the old system of making requisitions to the states.

Other state leaders had more selfish concerns, fearing their own personal loss of power. New York’s Governor George Clinton (1739-1812) made a valid point when he noted that the nation’s economy was improving, and that it seemed senseless to change to a new and untried government when the old one was beginning to work quite well. Others noted the lack of the traditional Christian oath for office-holders and felt that its absence would deprive the new nation of God’s blessing and protection.

The Antifederalists were concerned about the growth of federal power and control over the states. The third article of the Articles of Confederation stated: “Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled.” The Declaration of Independence stated something similar: “That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, free and independent states.” The Antifederalists wanted this protection secured in the new Constitution. Put simply, the federal



GOVERNOR GEORGE CLINTON

# We the People

government does not possess original sovereignty. The national government derives its authority to govern from the states that created it. The federal government is the creature of the

*individual* states which derive their authority and right to govern from the people under God. The Constitution is by nature a document of **enumerated powers**. This means that if a power is not listed (enumerated) in the Constitution itself, then the national government is not in possession

of that power. This is clearly stated in the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states

respectively, or to the people.” The increase in power of the federal government grows in proportion to how often the provisions of the Tenth Amendment are violated.

The fears of the Antifederalists have become a reality. States defer to the federal government on almost every issue, afraid that the federal government will hold valuable assets for state projects. The money the federal government takes from the states, the federal government holds over the states—“Do

my will or perish.” Restoration will come to America when the people realize that the state in which they live did not give up its sovereignty in the creation of the national government.

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SIGNING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION