

Chapter 09 - The Confederation and the Constitution

The Federalist

The Federalist was a series of articles written in New York newspapers as a source of propaganda for a stronger central government. The articles, written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, were a way for the writers to express their belief that it is better to have a stronger central government. The papers turned out to be a penetrating commentary written on the Constitution.

Confederation

A confederation is a group of sovereign states, each of which is free to act independently from the others. In 1776, when America gained its independence, a loose confederation was formed among the thirteen colonies. Under this confederation, the states were united by a weak national government, which was completely lacking constitutional authority. The national government had some control over issues such as military affairs and foreign policy. The states, however, took the majority of power into their own hands, such as the power to coin money and raise armies.

Constitution of the United States

The foundation of our country's national government; was drafted in Philadelphia in 1787; the Constitution establishes a government with direct authority over all citizens, it defines the powers of the national government, and it establishes protection for the rights of states and of every individual.

Anti-Federalists

People against federalists in 1787; disagreed with the Constitution because they believed people's rights were being taken away without a Bill of Rights; also did not agree with annual elections and the non-existence of God in the government.

Shay's Rebellion

1786- Led by Captain Daniel Shays, Revolutionary war veteran. An uprising that flared up in western Massachusetts. Impoverished backcountry farmers, many of them Revolutionary war veterans, were losing their farms through mortgage foreclosures and tax delinquencies. They demanded cheap paper money, lighter taxes, and a suspension of mortgage fore closures. Hundreds of angry agitators attempted to enforce these demands. Massachusetts authorities, supported by wealthy citizens, raised a small army under General Lincoln.

Federalists

A United States political party consisting of the more respectable citizens of the time; Federalists lived along the eastern seaboard in the 1790's; believed in advocating a strong federal government and fought for the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787-1788.

The "large-state plan"

It was the plan purposed by Virginia to set up a bi-cameral congress based on population, giving the larger states an advantage. It was first written as a framework for the constitution.

Articles of Confederation

The first "constitution" governing the United States after the Revolution; it was ratified in 1781 and it provided for a "firm league of friendship;" the legislative branch (Congress) had no power to regulate commerce or forcibly collect taxes and there was no national executive or judicial branch; it was an important stepping-stone towards the present constitution because without it the states would never have consented to the Constitution.

Electoral College

The Electoral College is a group of electors that are elected by the people to elect the President of the United States in every election year. This system was born along side the U.S. Constitution. This system is a way of speeding up Presidential elections and is still in force today. The representatives of each state must reflect the interests of the people within their respective states during each election. After the people in a state have voted, the votes are tallied. Whichever candidate has the most votes gets all of that state's votes in the Electoral College.

Land Ordinance of 1785

A red letter law which stated that disputed land the Old Northwest was to be equally divided into townships and sold for federal income; promoted education and ended confusing legal disagreements over land.

Three-Fifths Compromise

The three-fifths compromise was where a black slave was counted as three-fifths of a person when they were counting the population. The southern states wanted them counted as one whole person for more representatives in the House of Representatives. The northern states did not want them counted at all.

Northwest Ordinance

The Northwest Ordinance took place in 1787. They said that sections of land were similar to colonies for a while, and under the control of the Federal Government. Once a territory was inhabited by 60,000 then congress would admit it as a state. The original thirteen colonies were charters. Slavery was prohibited in these Northwest Territories. This plan worked so good it became the model for other frontier areas.

States' rights

The anti-federalists opposed the constitution because they thought it did not give enough power to the states. They believed that each state deserved certain rights that were not clearly defined in the constitution but were pertinent in democracy. Since these rights were not included in the original draft of the constitution there was a delay in the ratification process until the states were granted individual powers in an added clause.

Popular Sovereignty

Popular Sovereignty is the idea that people should have the right to rule themselves. This idea had revolutionary consequences in colonial America.

Anarchy

In Chapter 8 Anarchy is described as a lack of a strong centralized government. Often resulting in chaos, giving no security to landowners or upper-class people (wealthy). There is no stability, and what few laws exist are openly defied with no form of punishment. There are often problems in creating a usable and effective currency (this was a problem in inter-state relations.) In chapter 8 Anarchy it is referring to the period of time just prior to the creation of the constitution.

Society of the Cincinnati

Group of Continental Army officers formed a military order in 1783. They were criticized for their aristocratic ideals.

Great Compromise

1787; This compromise was between the large and small states of the colonies. The Great Compromise resolved that there would be representation by population in the House of Representatives, and equal representation would exist in the Senate. Each state, regardless of size, would have 2 senators. All tax bills and revenues would originate in the House. This compromise combined the needs of both large and small states and formed a fair and sensible resolution to their problems.

Consent of the governed

The people of a country have to consent to be governed, otherwise they have the right to overthrow the government. This theory was coined by John Locke

Republicanism

The theory of Republicanism was that the government was under the authority of the people it governs. The power in the people's hands is the basis for Democracy. The writers of the constitution used the Republicanism theory.

Checks & Balances

Checks and Balances "is the principle of government under which separate branches are employed to prevent actions by the other branches and are induced to share power." The framers of the constitution for the U.S. saw the policy of checks and balances necessary for the government to run smoothly. Third principle has prevented anyone Branch from taking over the government and making all the decisions. (Having a dictatorship.)

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is defined as supreme political power. When the Continental Congress in 1776 asked the colonies to draft new constitutions, it was asking them to become new states, whose sovereignty, according to republicanism, would rest on the people's authority. Power in the people's hands is the basis for democracy.

Mobocracy

Mobocracy- To be ruled by a mob. An example of people who used this method would be the American colonists. When England would impose taxes and acts, such as the Stamp Act, the colonists would become angered and protest it by forming mobs and doing such things as ransacking houses and stealing the money of stamp agents. The Stamp Act was eventually nullified because all the stamp agents had been forced to resign leaving no one to uphold it. This is an example of Mobocracy.

Daniel Shays

Captain Daniel Shays was a radical veteran of the Revolution. He led a rebellion, fittingly named Shays Rebellion. He felt he was fighting against a tyranny. The rebellion was composed of debtors demanding cheap paper money, lighter taxes, and suspension of mortgage foreclosures. He was sentenced to death but was later pardoned. The rebellion in 1786 helped lead to the Constitution and Shays somewhat became one of the Founding Fathers.

Alexander Hamilton

High Political leader-1786- 32 year old New Yorker who saved the convention from complete failure by engineering the adoption of his report. It called upon Congress to summon a convention to meet in Philadelphia the next year, not to deal with commerce alone but to bolster the entire fabric of the Articles of Confederation. Congress, because of Hamilton's influence, issued the call for a convention "for the sole and express purpose of revising" the Articles of Confederation. (1787) Hamilton was present as an advocate of super-powerful central government.

James Madison

Nicknamed "the Father of the Constitution"; talented politician sent to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787; his notable contributions to the Constitution helped to convince the public to ratify it.

Primogeniture

An English law in colonial times that said only the eldest son of the parents could inherit a landed estate. This left the wealthy but landless younger sons to seek their fortune elsewhere. Many of the younger sons went to the New World, and they included Gilbert, Raleigh, and Drake.

Federation

Thomas Jefferson wanted a tightly knit federation. This involved the yielding by the states of their sovereignty to a completely new federal government. This would give the states freedom to control their local affairs.

Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams was the wife of second president John Adams. She attempted to get rights for the "Ladies" from her husband who at the time was on the committee for designing the Declaration of Independence.