Shaping the Constitution
RESOURCES FROM THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

"We, the People v. We, the States": The Virginia Ratifying Convention

EXCERPTIONS

Excerpts from the Virginia Ratifying Debates: BY SUBJECT

The Judiciary
The Executive Branch
Bill of Rights
Taxation
Slavery

Excerpts from the Virginia Ratifying Debates: BY SPEAKER

Patrick Henry
James Madison
George Mason
Edmund Randolph

Excerpts from the Virginia Ratifying Debates: The Judiciary

George Mason

I must object to third Article dealing with the Judiciary. It appears to me that the majority of the powers given here are unnecessary and dangerous, and will at least impair if not destroy the state judiciaries and state legislatures. There is no limit on the reach of the Judiciary, it goes to every thing.

James Madison

With regards to the article establishing the Judiciary, I think we shall find nothing dangerous or inadmissible in it. My colleagues fear that members of a national legislature will behave poorly at every chance while ignoring all of their responsibilities. I would agree with them if this was a reasonable belief, but I do not find it so. I believe that these men are at least as willing to do their duty as to avoid it, and I believe in this great republican principle, that the people will have virtue and intelligence to select men of virtue and wisdom. If we cannot find enough virtue in the people to make this selection, then no form of government will secure liberty or happiness for us. We need not depend on the virtue of our rulers, but in the people who are to choose them.

John Marshall

This part of the plan dealing with the Judiciary is a great improvement on that system from which we are now departing: Gentlemen have gone on an idea that the federal courts will not make decisions with the same level of fairness and impartiality as other courts. It seems to me that they object to federal jurisdiction because they don't believe in a fair trial in the federal courts. If a federal judiciary is not created, then how will the people be protected from an infringement on the constitution? There is no other body that can afford such a protection. There are objections concerning elements of a jury trial. The right of challenging the jurors is not secured in the constitution. This is not done by our own state Constitution, or by any provision of the English government. It is not done by their Magna Charta, or the bill of rights? Why should its omission be objected to in the American Constitution? We are secure in Virginia without mentioning it in our Constitution, so why not this security for the federal court?

Patrick Henry

The whole history of human nature cannot produce a government like that before you. It seems to me that the manner in which the judiciary and other branches of the government are formed is calculated to make the states powerless and threatens the liberties of the people. It is with true concern, with grief, I tell you that I have waited with pain to come to this part of the plan; because I observed gentlemen admitted its being defective, and, I had my hopes, would have proposed amendments. But this part they have defended; and this convinces me of the necessity of obtaining amendments before it is adopted.

Questions for Consideration:

1. What arguments do the Anti-Federalists use against the proposed formation of the judicial branch? What fear is consistently expressed?
2. What role did James Madison believe that "virtue" played in a republican government?
3. Describe James Madison's rebuttal to the Anti-Federalists. What precedents does he point to?

Excerpts from the Virginia Ratifying Debates: The Executive Branch

George Mason

This is the most important section of the constitution. This clause removes the element of responsibility from the Executive position. The President is elected without rotation. My opponents will say that the Executive may be removed and replaced by a new election, but history tells us that if the President of the United States may be reelected, he will be. Our governor is obliged to return, after a given period, to private life. It is so in most of the states. This President will be elected time after time and will be in office for life. Returning to the masses and experiencing their problems is the best way to make sure a man remembers the interests of his constituents.

The Vice President appears to me to be not only an unnecessary but dangerous officer. As President of the Senate, the state from which he comes may have two votes, when the others will have but one.

James Monroe

The President ought to depend on the people of America for his election, and should be responsible to all of the states in an equal degree. Under the constitution he is to be elected by electors, in a manner perfectly dissatisfactory to my mind. I believe that with this system he will owe his election to the state governments, and not to the people at large. He will then be elected by a majority of the states, and not necessarily a majority of the people, giving an undue advantage to the small states. I also see the Vice-President as an unnecessary office, and must disapprove of this clause in its present form.

William Grayson

The Electoral College seems to be founded on accident rather than on any principle of government. I have an extreme objection to the mode of his election. I presume the seven Eastern States will always elect him. As he is vested with the power of making treaties, and as there is a material distinction between the carrying and productive states, the former will be disposed to have him to themselves. He will accommodate himself to their interests in forming treaties, and they will continue him perpetually in office. Thus mutual interest will lead them reciprocally to support one another. It will be a government of a faction, and this observation will apply to every part of it; for, having a majority, they may do what they please.

(*Pulls a folded piece of paper from his vest pocket)* I have made an estimate which shows with what facility they will be able to re-elect him. The number of electors is equal to the number of representatives and senators; that is, ninety-one. They are to vote for two persons. They give, therefore, one hundred and eighty-two votes. Let there be forty-five votes for four different candidates, and two for the President. He is one of the five highest, having but two votes, which he may easily purchase. In this case, by the 3d clause of the 1st section of the 2d article, the election is to be by the representatives, with the winner accumulating the most states in his favor:

Therefore, once in the House of Representatives, the President would win reelection by having the majority of the representatives in 7 states vote for him.

Let him win New Hampshire, a majority of its three representatives is two votes.

Let him win Rhode Island, one representative and one vote,

Connecticut, a majority of its five representatives with three votes,

New Jersey, a majority of its four representatives with three votes,

Delaware, one representative and one vote,

A majority of Georgia's three representatives with two votes, and

A majority of North Carolina's five representatives with three votes.

Therefore, the President could win reelection with a majority of state support with only fifteen votes in his favor. In other words, with a possibility of 156 votes, 91 state electors and 65 representatives, the President may be reelected by the voices of 17 against 139.

It may be said that this is an extravagant case, and will never happen. In my opinion, it will often happen. A person who is a favorite of Congress, if he gets but two votes of electors, may, by the subsequent choice of 15 representatives, be elected President. Surely the possibility of such a case ought to be excluded. I shall postpone mentioning in what manner he ought to be elected, till we come to offer amendments.

James Madison

Please allow me to make a few observations on this subject. While a number of my colleagues have objected to this system, none have put forth a better alternative. This was a difficult debate in the Philadelphia Convention, and would continue to be difficult for anyone attempting to find a perfect mode for electing the President. I will not argue with some of these gentlemen's objections, but will remind them that there is a great diversity of interests in these States. The choice for President should be made by the people. I have not yet found a better way of selecting him than that plan before us, and the other gentlemen have not provided one.

Questions for Consideration:

1. What criticisms does George Mason lodge against the plans for an executive branch to be included in the Constitution?
2. What are the criticisms of the Electoral College? What are the criticisms of the vice p resident? How do these criticisms differ from criticisms of the same institutions today?
3. Summarize William Grayson's objections. What scenario does he outline?
4. How does James Madison defend the plan for the executive branch?
5. What role does sectionalism play in these discussions? What fears motivate the Anti-Federalists?

Excerpts from Virginia Ratifying Debates: Bill of Rights

George Mason

When the people of Virginia formed their Government, they reserved certain great powers in the Bill of Rights. They would not trust their own citizens with the exercise of those great powers reserved in the Bill of Rights. Why then, do we suppose that our fellow Virginians would support this plan? In this system we give up a great part of our rights to a Government where the Representatives will have no communication with the people? I say then that there are great and important powers which need to be transferred to the State Governments, and given up to the General Government by this constitution.

Patrick Henry

The necessity of a Bill of Rights appears to me to be greater in this Government, than ever it was in any Government before. A Bill of Rights may be summed up in a few words. What do they tell us?—That our rights are reserved.—Why not say so? Is it because it will consume too much paper?

These Gentlemen's reasons against a Bill of Rights, do not satisfy me. Without saying which has the right side, it remains doubtful. A Bill of Rights is a favourite thing with the Virginians, and the people of the other States likewise. A Bill of Rights, even if unnecessary, will prevent any dispute….

Please forgive my immediate dissent, but if I understand correctly, we are admitting that the new system we are ratifying is defective from the beginning? Immediately after the proposed ratification, there comes a declaration that the paper before you is not intended to violate any of these three great rights—the liberty of religion, liberty of the press, and the trial by jury. What about all other rights? Those not listed are relinquished. Congress will not reason with you about the effect of this constitution. They will not take the opinion of this committee. They will interpret it as they please.

James Madison

I am sure that the gentlemen who are searching for previous amendments are not aware of the dangers which must result. If we were to make changes and then ratify the constitution, the other ratifying states have the right to challenge us, saying: "It is not proper, decent, or right, in you, to demand that we should reverse what we have done. It is more reasonable that you should yield to us than we to you. You cannot exist without us; you must be a member of the Union." As far as Mr. Henry's amendments are not objectionable, or unsafe, so far they may be recommended after ratification—not because they are necessary, but because they can produce no possible danger, and may gratify some gentlemen's wishes. But I never can consent to his previous amendments, because they are pregnant with dreadful dangers.

Questions for Consideration:

1. Why were the Anti-Federalists so insistent on a bill of rights?
2. What was the argument against a bill of rights?
3. How closely does the Bill of Rights correspond with the stated requirements of George Mason and Patrick Henry?

Excerpts from the Virginia Ratifying Debates: Taxation

Edmund Randolph

What could the General Government do without the power to levy taxes in order to raise money? I beg the friends of the Union to consider the necessity of this power—Without it we may abandon the Government altogether—It is the soul of the Government.

James Madison (*soft spoken, other delegates straining to hear)*

What will render us secure and happy at home, and what will render us respectably abroad? If we be free and happy at home, *we shall be* respectable abroad. We have been obliged to borrow money, even to pay off the interest of our debts. Is this a situation on which America can rely for security and happiness?

Patrick Henry

The power of direct taxation was called by the Honorable Gentleman [Edmund Randolph] the soul of the Government: Another Gentleman called it the lungs of the Government. We all agree that it is the most important part of the body politic. If the power of raising money be necessary for the General Government, it is no less so for the States. If money be so vital to Congress, is it not precious for those individuals from whom it is to be taken? Must I give my soul—my lungs, to Congress? Congress must have our souls. The State must have our souls. This is dishonorable and disgraceful.

James Monroe

What are the powers which the Federal Government ought to have? There are some that belong to the Federal, and others I believe should be left to the State Governments. The Federal Government should have control over the national affairs; the States should take care of the local interests. Neither the Confederation, nor this constitution, makes this division properly. I am strongly impressed with the necessity of having a firm national Government, but I am decidedly against giving it the power of direct taxation; because I think it endangers our liberties. I am a decided and warm friend to a *Bill of Rights*—the polar star, and great support of American liberty; and I am clearly of opinion, that the general powers outlined in the constitution should be guarded and checked by a Bill of Rights. Upon reviewing this plan, I must say, under my present impression, I think it is a dangerous Government, and calculated to secure neither the interests, nor the rights of our countrymen.

John Marshall

The friends of the constitution value liberty as much as its enemies. They wish to give no power that will endanger it. They wish to give the government powers to secure and protect it. Our inquiry here must be, whether the power of taxation is necessary to perform the objects of the constitution, and whether it is safe to grant this power. The prosperity and happiness of the people depend on the performance of these great and important duties of the general government. Can these duties be performed by one state? Can one state protect us, and promote our happiness? The honorable gentleman who has gone before me (*pointing to Governor Randolph*) has shown that Virginia cannot do these things. How, then, can they be done? By the national government only. Shall we refuse to give it power to do them?

William Grayson

As to direct taxation—give this up and you give up every thing, as it is the highest act of sovereignty: Surrender up this inestimable jewel, and you throw a pearl away richer than all your tribe.

Questions for Consideration:

1. In what ways are these Virginians motivated by the lingering memories and fears of the taxation troubles of the 1760s and 1770s with the British?
2. Why was the power of taxation such an important issue?
3. What had been the experience of these men under the taxation provisions in the Articles of Confederation?
4. What argument does James Madison make in favor of taxation?
5. What link does James Monroe make between the power of taxation and individual rights?

Excerpts from Virginia Ratifying Debates: Slavery

George Mason

There is a fatal section which has created more dangers than any other.—The first clause, in section 9 of Article I allows the importation of slaves for twenty years. As much as I value a Union of all the States, I would not admit the Southern States into the Union, unless they agreed to discontinue this disgraceful trade, because it would bring weakness and not strength to the Union. Furthermore, how can we include a clause to continue this abominable practice yet not include any protection for the property of that kind which we already have. I have ever looked upon this as a most disgraceful thing to America. I cannot express my detestation of it. Yet they have not secured us the property of the slaves we have already. So that 'They have done what they ought not to have done, and have left undone what they ought to have done.'

James Madison

I admit that this clause is inappropriate, and wish that it were possible for it be excluded. The Southern States would not have entered into the Union of America, without the temporary permission of that trade. And if they were excluded from the Union, the consequences might be dreadful to them and to us.

We are not in a worse situation than before. That traffic is prohibited by Virginia laws, and we may continue the prohibition. The Union in general is not in a worse situation. Under the articles of Confederation, it might be continued forever: But by this clause an end may be put to it after twenty years.

Great as the evil is, a losing the Union would be worse.

Patrick Henry

In this state there are two hundred and thirty-six thousand blacks, and there are many in several other states. But there are few or none in the Northern States. May Congress not say, that every black man must fight? Did we not see a little of this last war? We were not so hard pushed as to make emancipation general; but acts of Assembly passed that every slave who would go to the army should be free.

Another thing will contribute to bring this event about. Slavery is detested. We feel its fatal effects—we deplore it with all the pity of humanity. Let all these considerations, at some future period, press with full force on the minds of Congress. They will search that paper, and see if they have power of manu-mission. And have they not, sir? Have they not power to provide for the general defence and welfare? May they not think that these call for the abolition of slavery? May they not pronounce all slaves free, and will they not be warranted by that power? The majority of Congress is to the north, and the slaves are to the south. In this situation, I see a great deal of the property of the people of Virginia in jeopardy, and their peace and tranquility gone. Let me not dwell on this subject. I will only add that this, as well as every other property of the people of Virginia, is in jeopardy, and put in the hands of those who have no similarity of situation with us. This is a local matter, and I can see no propriety in subjecting it to Congress.

Have we not a right to say, Hear our propositions! Why, sir, your slaves have a right to make their humble requests. Those who are in the meanest occupations of human life have a right to complain.

Questions for Consideration:

1. What specific part of the Constitution is George Mason criticizing? What did it do?
2. Based on these statements, could George Mason be classified as an abolitionist? Is it clear whether his disapproval was of the slave trade or of the practice of slavery?
3. What does Patrick Henry predict will be the future of slavery under the new Constitution?
4. What defense of the constitutional provision protecting the slave trade does James Madison offer?
5. How do the arguments about slavery made here forecast future events in American history?

Patrick Henry's Speeches from the Virginia Ratifying Convention (Excerpts)

Patrick Henry against the New Plan of Government

The public mind, as well as my own, is extremely uneasy at the proposed change of Government. Who authorized the Philadelphia delegates to use the language of, *We, the People*, instead of *We, the States*? States are the actors in a **confederation**. This language is a clear indication that this proposal government represents a drastic change in government. The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear… . It is said eight States have adopted this plan. I declare that if twelve States and a half had adopted it, I would still reject it.

If I may, I would like to outline my problems with the proposed form of government: As I previously mentioned, the Preamble is ordained by "We the People," and not "We the States." This constitution departs too far from the previously adopted Articles of Confederation, and as a result, I still firmly believe that the delegates in Philadelphia exceeded their authority. I fear that the rights of the people are not properly protected by a bill of rights. And contrary to our established laws, the people of Virginia will be unable to change their form of government, because under this plan they will now be tied to the people of all of the other states. If all of Virginia's delegates are against taxation, Virginians may still be taxed, based upon the votes of other states.

I have, I fear, fatigued the Committee, yet I have not said the one hundred thousandth part of what I have on my mind, and wish to impart.

Patrick Henry on Taxation

The power of direct taxation was called by the Honorable Gentleman [Edmund Randolph] the soul of the Government: Another Gentleman called it the lungs of the Government. We all agree that it is the most important part of the body politic. If the power of raising money be necessary for the General Government, it is no less so for the States. If money be so vital to Congress, is it not precious for those individuals from whom it is to be taken? Must I give my soul—my lungs, to Congress? Congress must have our souls. The State must have our souls. This is dishonorable and disgraceful.

Patrick Henry on the Need for a Bill of Rights

The necessity of a Bill of Rights appears to me to be greater in this Government, than ever it was in any Government before. A Bill of Rights may be summed up in a few words. What do they tell us?—That our rights are reserved.—Why not say so? Is it because it will consume too much paper?

These Gentlemen's reasons against a Bill of Rights do not satisfy me. Without saying which has the right side, it remains doubtful. A Bill of Rights is a favourite thing with the Virginians, and the people of the other States likewise. A Bill of Rights, even if unnecessary, will prevent any dispute…The whole history of human nature cannot produce a government like that before you. It seems to me that the manner in which the judiciary and other branches of the government are formed is calculated to make the states powerless and threatens the liberties of the people. It is with true concern, with grief, I tell you that I have waited with pain to come to this part of the plan; because I observed gentlemen admitted its being defective, and, I had my hopes, would have proposed amendments. But this part they have defended; and this convinces me of the necessity of obtaining amendments before it is adopted…Please forgive my immediate **dissent**, but if I understand correctly, we are admitting that the new system we are ratifying is defective from the beginning? Immediately after the proposed ratification, there comes a declaration that the paper before you is not intended to violate any of these three great rights—the liberty of religion, liberty of the press, and the trial by jury. What about all other rights? Those not listed are **relinquished**. Congress will not reason with you about the effect of this constitution. They will not take the opinion of this committee. They will interpret it as they please.

Patrick Henry on the Potential for Emancipation

In this state there are two hundred and thirty-six thousand blacks, and there are many in several other states. But there are few or none in the Northern States. May Congress not say, that every black man must fight? Did we not see a little of this last war? We were not so hard pushed as to make **emancipation** general; but acts of Assembly passed that every slave who would go to the army should be free.

Another thing will contribute to bring this event about. Slavery is detested. We feel its fatal effects—we deplore it with all the pity of humanity. Let all these considerations, at some future period, press with full force on the minds of Congress. They will search that paper, and see if they have power of **manumission**. And have they not, sir? Have they not power to provide for the general defence and welfare? May they not think that these call for the abolition of slavery? May they not pronounce all slaves free, and will they not be warranted by that power? The majority of Congress is to the north, and the slaves are to the south. In this situation, I see a great deal of the property of the people of Virginia in jeopardy, and their peace and tranquility gone. Let me not dwell on this subject. I will only add that this, as well as every other property of the people of Virginia, is in jeopardy, and put in the hands of those who have no similarity of situation with us. This is a local matter, and I can see no **propriety** in subjecting it to Congress.

Have we not a right to say, Hear our propositions! Why, sir, your slaves have a right to make their humble requests. Those who are in the meanest occupations of human life have a right to complain.

Patrick Henry on the Dangers of the New Plan

He [*pointing at James Madison]* tells you of important blessings which he imagines will result to us and mankind in general, from the adoption of this system—I see the awful immensity of the dangers with which it is pregnant.—I see it—I feel it.—I see *beings* of a higher order, anxious concerning our decision. Our own happiness alone is not affected by the event—All nations are interested in the determination. We have it in our power to secure the happiness of one half of the human race. Its adoption may involve the misery of the other hemispheres—

Patrick Henry Relents

If my colleagues feel as though the matter has been fully discussed then they are more content than I … I would apologize to the other delegates for surely taking more than my share of the time, and thank them for their patience and attention. If I am outvoted, I know that I will have lost fighting for the right cause. Yet I will be a peaceful citizen! I will work to correct the defects of this system, but in a constitutional manner! I shall therefore patiently wait in expectation of seeing that Government changed so as to be compatible with the safety, liberty and happiness of the people.

James Madison's Speeches from the Virginia Ratifying Convention (Excerpts)

James Madison Defends the Constitution

(Speaking so low that it is difficult to hear him) We should be focused on the merits of the constitution itself, and its ability to promote happiness and security for Americans. If there are dangers in this system, let us plainly and clearly examine them. Contrary to the claims of Mr. Henry, Americans do not now live a state of "perfect tranquility and safety."

The constitution is an entirely new form of government, unlike any before it. The power of taxation is an essential one for a government to guarantee the security of its people, and it would be in the best interest of the government to use it only when necessary.

The power of raising and supporting armies is called both dangerous and unnecessary. I wish that it was not necessary. But suppose a foreign nation to declare war against the United States, must not the general Legislature have the power of defending the country?

James Madison on Taxation

(S*oft spoken, other delegates straining to hear)* What will render us secure and happy at home, and what will render us respectably abroad? If we be free and happy at home, *we shall be* respectable abroad. We have been obliged to borrow money, even to pay off the interest of our debts. Is this a situation on which America can rely for security and happiness?

James Madison Defends the Extension of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

I admit that this clause is inappropriate, and wish that it were possible for it be excluded. The Southern States would not have entered into the Union of America, without the temporary permission of that trade. And if they were excluded from the Union, the consequences might be dreadful to them and to us.

We are not in a worse situation than before. That traffic is prohibited by Virginia laws, and we may continue the prohibition. The Union in general is not in a worse situation. Under the articles of Confederation, it might be continued forever: But by this clause an end may be put to it after twenty years.

Great as the evil is, a losing the Union would be worse.

James Madison Defends the Actions of the Constitution Convention

Please allow me to make a few observations on this subject. While a number of my colleagues have objected to this system, none have put forth a better alternative. This was a difficult debate in the Philadelphia Convention, and would continue to be difficult for anyone attempting to find a perfect mode for electing the President. I will not argue with some of these gentlemen's objections, but will remind them that there is a great diversity of interests in these States. The choice for President should be made by the people. I have not yet found a better way of selecting him than that plan before us, and the other gentlemen have not provided one.

James Madison Defends the Judicial Branch

With regards to the article establishing the Judiciary, I think we shall find nothing dangerous or inadmissible in it. My colleagues fear that members of a national legislature will behave poorly at every chance while ignoring all of their responsibilities. I would agree with them if this was a reasonable belief, but I do not find it so. I believe that these men are at least as willing to do their duty as to avoid it, and I believe in this great republican principle, that the people will have virtue and intelligence to select men of virtue and wisdom. If we cannot find enough virtue in the people to make this selection, then no form of government will secure liberty or happiness for us. We need not depend on the virtue of our rulers, but in the people who are to choose them.

James Madison Argues against the Inclusion of Amendments before Ratification

I am sure that the gentlemen who are searching for previous amendments are not aware of the dangers which must result. If we were to make changes and then ratify the constitution, the other ratifying states have the right to challenge us, saying: "It is not proper, decent, or right, in you, to demand that we should reverse what we have done. It is more reasonable that you should yield to us than we to you. You cannot exist without us; you must be a member of the Union." As far as Mr. Henry's amendments are not objectionable, or unsafe, so far they may be recommended after ratification—not because they are necessary, but because they can produce no possible danger, and may gratify some gentlemen's wishes. But I never can consent to his previous amendments, because they are pregnant with dreadful dangers.

George Mason's Speeches from the Virginia Ratifying Convention (Excerpts)

George Mason against the New Plan of Government

It is clear that the proposed government is totally different than any system that has previously governed us. The right to tax the people clearly makes this system a national government with the power to totally annihilate the State Governments. These two powers cannot exist long together; the one will destroy the other. The question then will be, whether a consolidated Government can preserve the freedom, and secure the great rights of the people. I wish for such amendments and such only, as are necessary to secure the dearest rights of the people.

George Mason on the Need for a Bill of Rights

When the people of Virginia formed their Government, they reserved certain great powers in the Bill of Rights. They would not trust their own citizens with the exercise of those great powers reserved in the Bill of Rights. Why then, do we suppose that our fellow Virginians would support this plan? In this system we give up a great part of our rights to a Government where the Representatives will have no communication with the people? I say then that there are great and important powers which need to be transferred to the State Governments, and given up to the General Government by this constitution.

George Mason against the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

There is a fatal section which has created more dangers than any other.—The first clause, in section 9 of Article I allows the importation of slaves for twenty years. As much as I value a Union of all the States, I would not admit the Southern States into the Union, unless they agreed to discontinue this disgraceful trade, because it would bring weakness and not strength to the Union. Furthermore, how can we include a clause to continue this abominable practice yet not include any protection for the property of that kind which we already have. I have ever looked upon this as a most disgraceful thing to America. I cannot express my detestation of it. Yet they have not secured us the property of the slaves we have already. So that 'They have done what they ought not to have done, and have left undone what they ought to have done.'

George Mason against the Executive Branch

This is the most important section of the constitution. My opponents will say that the Executive may be removed and replaced by a new election, but history tells us that if the President of the United States may be reelected, he will be. Our governor is obliged to return, after a given period, to private life. It is so in most of the states. This President will be elected time after time and will be in office for life. Returning to the masses and experiencing their problems is the best way to make sure a man remembers the interests of his constituents.

The Vice President appears to me to be not only an unnecessary but dangerous officer. As President of the Senate, the state from which he comes may have two votes, when the others will have but one.

George Mason against the Judicial Branch

I must object to third Article dealing with the Judiciary. It appears to me that the majority of the powers given here are unnecessary and dangerous, and will at least impair if not destroy the state judiciaries and state legislatures. There is no limit on the reach of the Judiciary, it goes to every thing.

Edmund Randolph's Speeches from the Virginia Ratifying Convention (Excerpts)

Governor Edmund Randolph on the New Plan of Government

In Philadelphia I refused to sign this constitution, and if the circumstances were the same, I would again refuse. The Gentleman [*pointing at Patrick Henry*] inquires, why we used the language of "We, the People." I ask why not? The Government is for the people; and the misfortune was, that the people had no **agency** in the Government before. I have always acted in what I believe to be my duty to my country. I refused to sign before, but with eight states already supporting the constitution, a vote against it is a vote against the Union. I am a friend to the Union.

Governor Edmund Randolph on the New Plan of Government

(In a state of frustration and exhaustion) Mr. Chairman—If we go on in this irregular manner, contrary to our resolution, instead of three to six weeks, it will take us six months to decide this question!

Our safety, our political happiness, and our existence, depend on the Union of the States. As such, I will vote for the adoption of the constitution. I believe that this proposed form of government secures the ideals for which we fought the Revolutionary War. I believe that there are real dangers under our current form of government, and that the Articles of Confederation are damaged beyond repair. The constitution will provide us with the necessary national government.
If the Union be now lost, I fear it will remain so forever.

When I maturely weigh the advantages of the Union (*gesturing with right hand)*, against the consequences of its **dissolution** (*gesturing with left hand)*; when I see safety on my right, and destruction on my left; I cannot hesitate to decide in favor of the former.

Edmund Randolph on Taxation

What could the General Government do without the power to levy taxes in order to raise money? I beg the friends of the Union to consider the necessity of this power—Without it we may abandon the Government altogether—It is the soul of the Government.