



The Debate on the Constitution : Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles and Letters During the Struggle over Ratification, Part Two: January to August 1788 (Library of America)

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Here, on a scale unmatched by any previous collection, is the extraordinary energy and eloquence of our first national political campaign: During the secret proceedings of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the framers created a fundamentally new national plan to replace the Articles of Confederation and then submitted it to conventions in each state for ratification. Immediately, a fierce storm of argument broke. Federalist supporters, Antifederalist opponents, and seekers of a middle ground strove to balance public order and personal liberty as they praised, condemned, challenged, and analyzed the new Constitution. Gathering hundreds of original texts by Franklin, Madison, Jefferson, Washington, and Patrick Henry—as well as many others less well known today—this unrivaled collection allows readers to experience firsthand the intense year-long struggle that created what remains the world's oldest working national charter.

Assembled here in chronological order are hundreds of newspaper articles, pamphlets, speeches, and private letters written or delivered in the aftermath of the Constitutional Convention. Along with familiar figures like Franklin, Madison, Patrick Henry, Jefferson, and Washington, scores of less famous citizens are represented, all speaking clearly and passionately about government. The most famous writings of the ratification struggle — the Federalist essays of Hamilton and Madison — are placed in their original context, alongside the arguments of able antagonists, such as "Brutus" and the "Federal Farmer."

Part Two gathers collected press polemics and private commentaries from January to August 1788, including all the amendments proposed by state ratifying conventions as well as dozens of speeches from the South Carolina, Virginia, New York, and North Carolina conventions. Included are dramatic confrontations from Virginia, where Patrick Henry pitted his legendary oratorical skills against the persuasive logic of Madison, and from New York, where Alexander Hamilton faced the brilliant Antifederalist Melancton Smith.

Informative notes, biographical profiles of all writers, speakers, and recipients, and a detailed chronology of relevant events from 1774 to 1804 provide fascinating background. A general index allows readers to follow specific topics, and an appendix includes the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution (with all amendments).

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