

Federalist No. 1

Hamilton was the founder of the Federalist Party. He was a lawyer and businessman from New England who observed the woes of the ineffective Articles of Confederation. His primary complaint was the lack of currency and measurement & weight standards for commerce; he viewed commerce as the backbone of any economy (and he is correct). Each of the colonies had their own currency and commonly taxed out-of-state imports in order to encourage citizens to buy local. The consequences of this, in essence, alienated states from trading with each other and caused commercial gridlock and inflation. Hamilton was for a strong central government. The country needed a strong central government to regulate these two outstanding issues so the economy could flourish.

Congress did not have the power to collect taxes under the Articles of Confederation. Congress could *ask* for donations, but could not *mandate* tax collection. Guess what? No state volunteered to pay taxes- go figure.

Hamilton sought to appeal to citizens with his writings in the Federalist Papers, primarily in New England area, with the concept that the government was not efficient under the Articles of Confederation. The Articles of Confederation proved that the colonies, and people, were selfish. They **did not** want to pay taxes, and they wanted to maximize their state profits by taxing intrastate commerce...and thus demonstrated that the states had to be forced (through a central government that Hamilton argued for) to come together for the greater good of the developing country.

Hamilton sought a middle ground in formulating the new central government. He did not want to usurp state authority. He simply wanted to get states to participate in the federal government. They had completely refused to pay taxes or participate in any national issues under the Articles of Confederation. However, the southern states perceived Hamilton's moves as the desire to take away all state autonomy.

Federalist No. 1 was written as if Hamilton wanted to inform the public about the facts of how a weak central government failed and how a strong central government was needed to grow the country, through *discourse*- and **not** do what politicians do today- which is provide a few emotional/rhetorical talking points.

It is amazing that the illiteracy rate was around **thirty percent** in the colonial times, yet the Federal Papers prose writing was 'professional' and the public was to 'be informed, not duped'.

The Articles of Confederation were also ineffective, according to Hamilton (and Washington), because they did not provide the central government the power to raise an Army and Navy. This left the country open to armed movements internally (Shay's Rebellion) and financially broke. Shay's Rebellion is what prompted Washington to leave retirement and enter the federal government again- he knew that a country's strength resided in its ability to defend itself against foreign and domestic threats, and Shay's Rebellion proved that the government had no ability to do so.

A major reason why Hamilton argued that a strong federal Constitution would be challenged is because it would threaten those already established in state power as they would have to relinquish much of it to a centralized federal government. This is central tenant in the first three paragraphs of Federalist No. 1.

In Federalist No. 1, Hamilton implored the reader to discern the truth about the campaign for a new constitution from that of the hyperbole being orchestrated by opposition groups to the newly proposed constitution. In 1780's Colonial America, the movement to create a new national government by means of a new constitution was well underway. There were the supporters of the newly proposed constitution on one side, namely the Federalists to which Hamilton had allied with. On the other side of this debate were the anti-Federalists, namely the Republicans whose notable supporters included James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

Hamilton considered himself to be a moderate, and his decision to support the new constitution was based upon, from his perspective, sound reasoning, logic, and a genuine desire to see America prosper as a free and independent nation.

The opponents to the newly proposed constitution based their support on the mantra that a strong national government, one that has binding authority over the states, could (by its very nature) legislate beyond the limits that are to be imposed by the constitution, thus threatening the individual rights of the state (and people).

Hamilton gave deference to the natural distrust that was present in the minds of those opposed to the new constitution. Therefore, he urged the people to give careful consideration to the facts associated with the movement for a new governmental frame work.

Hamilton further understood that those of pure heart, as well as manipulators, can be buried together on the same side of an issue. This makes it much more difficult for the people to determine the necessity of any proposal because they rely exclusively on their personal politics. This statement was made without preference for either side; he viewed it equally applicable.