primarysourcedocument

An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution (Webster; excerpts)

An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution (Webster; excerpts)

“An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution”

(Excerpts)

By Noah Webster

October 10, 1787

[Webster, Noah. “An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution.” In *Friends of the Constitution: Writings of the “Other” Federalists, 1787–1788,* edited by Colleen A. Sheehan and Gary L. McDowell (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998). 5/11/2017. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2069. Online Library of Liberty. Used with permission of the Online Library of Liberty.]

To assist the struggle for liberty, commerce has interposed, and in conjunction with manufacturers, thrown a vast weight of property into the democratic scale. Wherever we cast our eyes, we see this truth, that *property* is the basis of *power;* and this, being established as a cardinal point, directs us to the means of preserving our freedom. Make laws, irrevocable laws in every state, destroying and barring entailments; leave real estates to revolve from hand to hand, as time and accident may direct; and no family influence can be acquired and established for a series of generations--no man can obtain dominion over a large territory--the laborious and saving, who are generally the best citizens, will possess each his share of property and power, and thus the balance of wealth and power will continue where it is, in the *body of the people.* . . .

Virtue, patriotism, or love of country, never was and never will be, till mens’ natures are changed, a fixed, permanent principle and support of government. But in an agricultural country, a general possession of land in fee simple, may be rendered perpetual, and the inequalities introduced by commerce, are too fluctuating to endanger government. An equality of property, with a necessity of alienation, constantly operating to destroy combinations of powerful families, is the very *soul of a republic*--While this continues, the people will inevitably possess both *power* and *freedom;* when this is lost, power departs, liberty expires, and a commonwealth will inevitably assume some other form.

Original Author Sort: Webster, Noah
Publication Date: 11787.10.10.02
Topic: Natural Law and Natural Rights in the American Constitutional Tradition
Subtopic: The Bill of Rights
Publication Date Range: 1787

Source URL: https://nlnrac.org/american/bill-of-rights/documents/webster