

A N  
A D D R E S S  
T O T H E  
L E G I S L A T U R E A N D P E O P L E  
O F  
T H E S T A T E  
O F  
C O N N E C T I C U T,

On the Subject of dividing the State into  
Districts for the Election of Represent-  
atives in Congress.

---

BY A CITIZEN OF CONNECTICUT.

---

23165

[ Beers, William Pitt ], 1766-1810.

An Address to the Legislature and People of the State of  
Connecticut.

New Haven, Greens, 1791. 37 pp.

AAS copy.

---

## To the Legislature, &c.

**T**HERE are seasons in human affairs, when the people, oppressed by some great calamity, distracted by violent factions, or engaged in pursuits, which involve the fundamental interests, the safety or existence of the society, are capable of receiving impressions from those objects alone, which appear in some striking form or dazzling colours.

There are other periods, when, in the lethargy of a permanent and profound peace, the ordinary and silent occupations of individuals constitute the most material operations of the community; and men, engrossed in personal cares and pleasures, are unable to comprehend or feel a public interest.

The reflection of a moment will present still another situation of things, in which men, emerged from a state of dependence and oppression, see displayed, in the dawn of a renovated government, a vast field for political and social improvements; when the prosperous industry of individuals is so intimately connected with the measures and fortune of the government, that their ordinary professional calculations lead them directly or indirectly to contemplate the common interests. This is a state in which the manners of men, the arts of life, and the arts of policy are in progress; when the new prospects, continually opening, stimulate curiosity, awaken new energies, and create new desires, as they unfold new sources of enjoyment.

This is a state, in which I conceive we live: It is truly a period of improvements; a period, in which the spirit of the people is peculiarly susceptible of the influence of philosophy and reason; while, with the fullest sense of our

( 4 )

our rights, and the liveliest interest in the public welfare, we have that growing prosperity, that fair portion of political and civil tranquility, which induces a moderation of temper extremely favorable to speculative and dispassionate enquiry. It is that period, when the deliberations of reason act in perfect concert with the impulses of the heart ; a concurrence essential to the spirit of free republics, where the calculations of policy have an invariable reference to the feelings of the people.

Yet there are occasions, when the spirit of improvement, child as it is of reason itself, requires the directing and restraining hand of its parent ; since it would sometimes depart from the line of truth and policy, and, under an imposing name, produce devious and irregular innovation. This is particularly to be apprehended in the political regulations of the state, where an age of revolutions, by breaking up old systems, has thrown open a door to projection and experiment, in all their fantastic shapes.

Policy would dictate that single reforms, in political establishments should be made upon comprehensive principles, and in support, not in derogation, of the system, to which they relate ; that if the system be radically defective, the reform should be fundamental ; but that partial alterations should be admitted only with a view to render it more simple and uniform. If this rule be not adhered to, if we distract our systems by introducing discordant principles ; if we suffer different parts of the same theory to rest upon the opposite and inconsistent grounds ; our political institutions, instead of being a well adjusted system, will become a fanciful patchwork, without symmetry, without beauty.

I would apply these reflections to a very important question, which will probably, in a short time, come before the legislature : I mean the question relative to the division of the state into districts, for the election of representatives in Congress. It were indeed to be regretted that the question should ever be brought up ; because

it

( 5 )

are, po- tion pas- ati- s of free wa- ve- ting me- un- in- the olu- on a astic tical rin- em, de- that view : not : dif- the tent ng a ork, tant be- the re- pret- aut- at

it were to be wished, that the wisest of those institutions, which have been transmitted to us from our ancestors, which have been sanctioned by their antiquity, and supported by experience, and to which the habits of the people have been assimilated, by a long course of successful practice, might not suffer the impeachment of a public examination, at the present juncture, and in so partial a form. But I have reason to presume, from a late attempt in the assembly, that the subject must again be agitated. I shall therefore request the candid indulgence of the citizens of this state, while I endeavour to discuss this important question, and express those reflections, which compose, in my mind, an insurmountable argument against the proposed measure.

The circumstances, under which the question was introduced at the last sessions, did not exhibit many symptoms favorable to the plan : for it will be remembered, that the attempt expired in its birth, by this simple suggestion, that it was preposterous to divide the state into districts, till by the event of the enumeration of the people, we should have ascertained the number of representatives, to which we should be entitled. This oversight would justly create a suspicion against the policy of the measure ; or, at least, it would destroy any presumptions in its favor, from its being supported by a party, however numerous that party might be : For can it be conceived, that any man should have examined, with care and attention, the merits of a question, who could be guilty of so capital an error, in the mode and season of its introduction ? Is it possible, that any one should comprehend the principles, or understand the operation and tendency of a measure, who should be too short-sighted to discern a collateral circumstance, which must render it utterly impracticable in the outset ? Ingenuous simplicity would wonder at such crude schemes of indigested politics ; but men of observation and experience, who have seen how often and how successfully such schemes have been introduced and carried through the process

( 6 )

process of legislative deliberation, will cease to admire, while they equally lament the evil.

The general reflections, with which I introduced this subject, will not, I presume, be deemed impertinent, since, while, on the one hand, they express the motives for this address, which I derived from the spirit of the times ; on the other, they suggest the grounds, on which I hope for a fair, liberal and thoughtful attention.

Representation, in the genuine sense of the term, is a quality peculiar to modern republics : for tho some of the ancient system, comprised a certain department, which was considered as the established agent of the people, and empowered to express their voice in the national deliberations ; yet the constitution of this department was destitute of some of the essential principles of representation. In some forms of government, this branch assumed a monarchical complexion : In others, it was simply the leader and protector of the populace, against the tyranny of the aristocracy : In general, it was deficient in the qualities of fulness and responsibility : It represented the people merely in their corporate, not in their diffusive capacity ; and consequently was calculated rather to check the designs, which were levelled at the liberties of the whole body, than to introduce into the ordinary deliberations that detail of wants, feelings and various interests, which, notwithstanding the simplicity of ancient manners, take place in every community. In those governments, the representative body was generally much less numerous than the senatorial ; an inversion of that just order and proportion, which form the groundwork of a well adjusted and well balanced republic. It would indeed be too bold to assert that the idea of representation was entirely unknown in the ancient forms ; but, it must be allowed, that the principle was so inadequate, so partial and feeble, as hardly to merit a name, which marks the peculiar glory of modern, and (I may say with pride) of American institutions. It was reserved to our own country to give this principle its most finished

( 7 )

ed form and character, and, as it has made the most dazzling display of the spirit of liberty, to furnish also the fairest and most decisive experiments in this great branch of politics. Connecticut has taken an early and important part in this operation, and while, in some great points of improvement, she has fallen far short of her neighbors, she has in others assumed an advanced station, and has the merit of giving, at a remote period, a degree of perfection to some parts of her constitution, which if it be not final, is at least unrivalled. Among other things, her mode of forming the superior branches of her legislature, and of electing her representatives in the federal government deserve our highest admiration. This I shall attempt to prove in the course of the following discussion.

I assume it as a principle, which tho it may not have the entire force of an axiom, will, after a few explanations, be readily assented to,—that election and representation are reciprocal. The original idea of a popular government is, that each member of the society has an agency in framing those laws, by which he is governed. It is not only to render deliberation practicable, but to give effect to many important principles, and to answer many valuable purposes, that, as the society enlarges, this agency is transferred to a few invested with the authority of, and responsible to each of their constituents; this authority to be exercised in the name of the constituent, and this responsibility to be evidenced in the event of an election, the only moment in which, strictly speaking, the people possess any deliberative power. Here the elected stands in the place of the elector, and of him alone: He represents, and is accountable to no other: He exercises only the powers expressly delegated to him, and derives his political capacity thro no other channel, and from no other source, than that, from which he thus solemnly exercises his authority. On this principle it is, that the term *freeman* has been appropriated to an elector, signifying that none but those who *elect* have any political *liberty*, that is, are *represented*, or have any voice in  
the

( 8 )

the public counfels ; and on this ground, the common phrase, that a member of Congress should represent the whole union, is incorrect, tho the sentiment is commendable.

To fortify my principle still further, and to prove that it has uniformly been supported by the sense of the people of America, it may be necessary only to remind you, that it was on this very principle, or one in strict connection with it, that the colonies commenced their opposition to the usurpations of the British parliament. But did the Americans, when they claimed an exemption from taxes, on the ground of not being represented, ever admit the idea, that they could be *represented*, while they did not *elect* ? Did they ever assent to the reasoning of the British minister, relative to a *virtual* representation ? Did not the band of patriots, who advocated the American cause, refute this reasoning, and prove, to the dismay of their adversary, that nothing could exceed the sophistry of the principle, but the folly of the example he found to support it, in the rotten and monstrous system of British representation ?

Having established one main principle, I shall proceed to another equally important and intimately connected with it, and shall then draw those inferences which naturally rise from the comparison.

The American republic is a confederation of states : It possesses few features of a simple national government ; and those appear, not so much in the structure of the system, as in the operation of its powers. This federate complexion is visible in the whole process of the constitution, from its origin to its final establishment. It was framed by delegates acting under the authority of states ; It was ratified by independent conventions representing their several communities, in a great work to which the powers of a legislature were considered as incompetent ; This ratification was not required to be made by merely a majority of the states, or by a majority of the whole people of the United States, as it must have been if it had been purely a national act.

In

In  
natic  
capa  
that  
sent  
reme  
reful  
the c  
plicia  
senat  
jealo  
stanc  
argu  
to g  
It w  
med  
of r  
fund  
form  
I  
veri  
exil  
cipl  
plet  
the  
ing  
ver  
cor  
er  
pur  
ed  
co  
tho  
an  
we  
wh  
pu  
fel

( 9 )

In order to shew that the house of representatives is a national body, representing the people in their diffusive capacity, a distinction has been strongly marked, between that branch, and the senate ; the one supposed to represent the people, and the other the states. But it will be remembered, that the constitution of the senate is a mere result of compromise, and is, therefore, an exception to the original and leading principles of the system. Simplicity and symmetry would have demanded, that the senate should be constituted in another manner ; but the jealousy of small states rendered a departure, in this instance, from the principle of proportion necessary. No argument, therefore, can be drawn from this distinction, to give a national colour to the house of representatives. It would indeed be singular, that the senate should be formed on less simple and uniform principles than the house of representatives, while the very design and appropriate functions of the former body render simplicity and uniformity peculiarly expedient.

It is a principle, in politics, that every national government should have the means of perpetuating its own existence. But, in the American constitution, this principle, tho' recognized, appears in an impaired and incomplete form : For tho' it has reserved a final controul over the election laws of the states, and a power also of enacting those laws, in case the states should fail, yet, in this very arrangement, the states are strongly regarded, as component parts of the system, even in this essential power of regulating elections. Had the government been purely national, the constitution could not have delegated this power or any part of it to any district or division, consistently with the principle I have advanced. But the American states, uniting for their mutual defence, and instituting such a form of common government, as would compass the resources and direct the force of the whole, in the most effectual manner, to answer this great purpose ; have, in their act of union, reserved to themselves a very important, delicate and purely national prerogative.

( 10 )

rogative. In this view the system wears a federal complexion, and the representatives, elected by the people as members of a state, and under laws prescribed by the authority of a state, may properly be said to represent the state as a community.

There is another instance, in which the constitution has expressed a striking recognition of the federate principle. It has provided that the number of representatives of each state shall be proportioned to the number of its inhabitants, allowing one for every thirty thousand; but that each state shall have at least one representative. However small the quantity of its population may be, it shall, in no case, be deprived of that right, to which, as a distinct state, it is entitled. Suppose a state have but twenty thousand; it shall not be annexed to a neighboring state, in order to preserve the ratio of representation uniform. Suppose it possess forty five thousand, the surplus shall not be taken and added to the excess which may take place in another state, in order that the representation of the whole mass may be full and complete. But how is this? Shall fifteen thousand, in the last instance, remain unrepresented, while in the first the people have more than their share of representative influence? This must be the consequence, upon the principle that the people are represented in their individual, and not in their social capacity. The constitution has provided no sub-ratio, as an exception to the general ratio of representation, in favor of a small state, nor in favor of that fractional remnant of population, which may exist in a large state, after an equal division of its people—Let us suppose, for argument, that the population of each of the thirteen states be fifty nine thousand: It is evident, that by the constitution, the number of the house of representatives would be thirteen; but the whole mass of people would be seven hundred & sixty seven thousand; which, according to the ratio and on the ground that the people are diffusively represented, would produce twenty five: But shall half the people then be unrepresented,

or

( 11 )

or shall the constitution in one moment declare, that every thirty thousand inhabitants shall have one representative, and in the next that every sixty thousand shall have but one ?

It may be remarked, in this place, that the principle contended for will forever prove absurd and impracticable in district elections ; and will involve this dilemma, that either the established ratio of representation must be disregarded, or in frequent instances a distinct portion of the community must be unrepresented. This absurdity is removed by our present mode of election, in which every citizen has a vote in electing every representative.

If it had been the design of the constitution, that the people of the United States should be represented as one mass, it would certainly have broken down the barriers of the states, and laid all open to one simple and comprehensive arrangement : It would have made a new division of the territory, without regarding pre-established boundaries, and accommodated to all a uniform election law.

If I have been successful in establishing my two main principles, I imagine it must appear evident, that the citizens of this state cannot be represented by men, in whose election they have had no voice : and that each citizen, as a member of the state, has a right, on the ground of the constitution, to be represented by, and consequently to elect, the whole number, which the constitution has assigned to us. If the delegates represent the state, it is requisite that they should be responsible to the state ; Not indeed to the legislature, but to that whole mass, which is comprehended within certain long established limits, and associated in one community. It cannot here be objected, that the legislature possesses all the corporate powers of the society ; for in fact, this business of electing persons to represent the whole body of the people, is an exception to that delegation of powers, with which the legislature is invested ; an exception uniformly practised upon, and sanctioned by the constitution of the United

( 12 )

ed States. But in the case of a district election, what becomes of this responsibility? It is wasted and utterly extinguished. The people of the state have no controul over any one of those who represent them. It will be said the responsibility is only divided—Who then has given the legislature authority to make this division, and to declare, that each shall be responsible to a different community from that, which the constitution has ordained he shall represent? But in being divided it is lost; for if neither of the representatives singly is responsible to the state, can the whole together be so? On what principle is a new species of political society erected, independent of the majority of the people, unknown to the constitution, and endowed with qualities and powers, which the people of this state have never transferred from themselves?

The evil I have described, is in some degree remedied, by a scheme adopted in the state of Maryland, where there is the appearance, tho' but a partial reality, of a district election. In that state, six persons are elected to represent so many distinct districts, in which they must severally be resident; and in this election, the whole people of the state have a voice. This practice, however, is liable to great objections both in point of principle and policy, as will be shewn in a proper place; but is an example, which strongly supports my general reasoning, and presents one capital step towards a complete imitation of the liberal and finished system of this state.

If then each citizen, on the present establishment, has a right to be represented by five persons, it is plain, that by a district election, you abridge him of four fifths of his privilege: He is considered, as to this purpose, no longer a member of the state: He is deprived of his controul, and abstracted from that intimate concern and connection, which nature and reason have established between the citizen and those who have the custody of his dearest interests: He is detached from his relation to his fellow citizens at large, constituted a member of a society, which possesses but a small portion of the common authority,

thori  
whic  
ty:  
to fe  
scrib  
deriv  
stead  
Fu  
ment  
plura  
princ  
riabl  
time:  
prov  
to w  
elect  
from  
be fa  
secur  
often  
princ  
relat  
have  
trict  
the  
amb  
date:  
bina  
Si  
ever  
to th  
F  
fect  
min  
subj  
and  
mon  
sens  
field

on, what  
 id utterly  
 controul  
 it will be  
 then has  
 sion, and  
 different  
 as ordain-  
 t is lost ;  
 onfible to  
 at princi-  
 pendent  
 stitution,  
 the peo-  
 mselves ?  
 remedied,  
 id, where  
 , of a dis-  
 elected to  
 hey must  
 hole peo-  
 iver, is  
 ciple and  
 is an ex-  
 ning, and  
 itation of

thority, and cut off from the exercise of those powers, in which he can participate only with the whole community : He is estranged from that interest, which he ought to feel, in the decisions of a common majority, and proscribed from the enjoyment of the advantages he would derive from the service and protection of a number, instead of one, equally and immediately dependent upon him.

Further, it is a fundamental principle in our government, that elections should be determined not merely by a plurality, but by a majority of the whole suffrages. This principle has been adhered to in this state, with an invariable tenacity ; and the inconveniences which have sometimes attended it in practice, and some instances of its proving unsuccessful, have never been thought sufficient to warrant a departure from. This principle a district election will render totally inefficacious. Calculating from the ordinary course of elections in this state, it may be safely presumed, that a district election would never secure a majority of the state in favor of any five, how often soever it might be repeated. The success of the principle, in our present form, is favored by that mutual relation and regard, which the different parts of the state have to each other : But on the proposed plan, each district would act only on its own ground. Add to this, that the district election, as it would multiply the chances of ambition, and consequently augment the roll of candidates, would enhance the difficulty of an eventual combination.

Such are the properties of an election by districts. In every view, it is derogatory to the rights, and dangerous to the interests of the citizen.

Having considered the proposed measure, as it will affect the rights of the people, I will now proceed to examine its merits in point of policy. This branch of the subject, since it presents to the mind features more simply and strongly marked, and appeals to principles more common and familiar, is calculated probably to make a more sensible impression, as it opens a wider and more various field of argument.

( 14 )

It is requisite that those, who are commissioned for the important purpose of making laws to regulate a society, should be capable of representing that society, in the most perfect manner : To this end, they should have the most complete knowledge of the wants, the interests, and the character of their constituents. If they are deficient in this knowledge, their laws will prove useless, pernicious or inapplicable.

Further, in a government of limited and defined authority, such as a confederation of states, in which the whole powers of the community are divided between the general and particular governments, it is necessary that the representative in each should possess such qualities, as correspond to the nature of the powers he is to exercise, and as calculated most effectually to accomplish the proper objects of the government.

These principles lead us to an enquiry, what is the nature of the powers that are incident to the federal government, and the proper objects of its administration, and then, what are those qualities, which bear such relation, and the best means of securing them.

The objects of the federal government are expressed in the preamble to its constitution ; and the detail of powers enumerated in that instrument, bear the most exact relation to those objects. They are chiefly political, with such an admixture of civil powers, as are absolutely necessary to the operation of the former, or are of so general a complexion, and concern the whole Union to equally, that no other, but the united government, can execute them, with the requisite uniformity, efficacy and eventual justice.

The principal objects of the general government are the public safety, which includes the powers of peace, and of war both external and internal, that of repelling invasions and suppressing rebellion, and the power of commanding the common force, and of taxation as incident to these—And commerce, which includes all concerns with foreign nations, and between the several states and

implies the p  
late these con

But how a  
people ? Ho  
interests, whi

A moment  
are in every so  
generally agr  
former comp  
more numero  
community a  
ity of the sub  
the free circu  
and intercha  
tendency to a  
stroy local di  
laws, and tax  
naturally affe  
respect to the  
will be affect  
time laws, an  
sentially con  
and of the  
which necess  
there is by t  
still more by  
rights and in  
regulations car

The relati  
and disputes  
under the gu  
so uniform,  
need no exp.

Thus with  
abstracted fr  
classes of int  
interests form  
consequence

implies

for the  
e a so-  
iety, in  
ld have  
terests,  
are de-  
useless,

implies the power of making all laws necessary to regulate these concerns.

But how are these powers to operate, and affect the people? How do they act upon that complex detail of interests, which are incident to men in social life?

A moment's reflection will make it evident, that there are in every society certain interests in which the members generally agree, and others in which they differ. The former compose a small but important, and the latter a more numerous class. The uniformity of interests in any community arises either from the simplicity and uniformity of the subject in which an interest is created, or from the free circulation of property and the easy intercourse and interchange of commercial dealing, which have a tendency to assimilate and equalize interests, and to destroy local distinctions. Thus the laws of trade, military laws, and taxes on real and commercial property, will naturally affect only the general interests of a state. With respect to the rights of persons, or personal interests, they will be affected only by the necessary execution of maritime laws, and those criminal regulations, which are essentially connected with them, by the laws of revenue, and of the military, and by those civil establishments, which necessarily spring from a union of states.—But there is by the very constitution of human nature, and still more by the habits of society, such a uniformity in rights and interests merely personal, that no general regulations can effect them with any material inequality.

The relative interests of states, in case of differences and disputes in their corporate capacity, which are put under the guardianship of the Union, appear at first view so uniform, as they respect the inhabitants of each, as to need no explanation.

Thus with regard to a state, as connected with, and as abstracted from the union, there may be said to be three classes of interests. The first is composed of combined interests formed from a union of particulars as a natural consequence of social intercourse: The second is an ex-

( 16 )

ensive class, comprehending all those interests, purely internal, and in a great measure local, which belong to the inhabitants as members of the smaller circles, and in some points of relation as members of the whole state ; The third is that residue of domestic interests, which human laws have left to the government of human discretion. The second class constitutes the proper subject of those civil regulations, to which the state legislatures are properly competent, and the first can be protected and secured only by general laws formed from a survey of general relations, and commensurate with the relations to which they apply. An attentive observer discovers a certain beautiful gradation and analogy pervading this complex but harmonious system and sees, in this distribution of powers, all the possible interests of men provided for, and all the objects of human government accomplished.

It should ever be remembered, as a truth of the most decisive importance, that the powers of the federal government are limited and general ; limited, I mean, as to the channels in which they flow ; For they cannot be limited with respect to the means necessary to accomplish their object ; that they operate generally, and act upon society, like the capital wheel in machinery, which gives to all the lesser revolutions an equable measure and a uniform direction.

What then are the qualities in a federal representative which bear a proper relation to the powers he is to administer ? Certainly they are such qualities as enable him to represent general interests ; such as embrace the whole extent of a common operation ; such as abstract him from local views, and raise him to an elevation, from which society appears with a smooth and level aspect. He should have an acquaintance with all those affairs in which the state is concerned as a community : His knowledge should reach foreign objects, in the relation they bear to the union and to his own state : He should understand the relative situation, interests and politics of the

fift  
pec  
and  
mu  
he  
the  
con  
difi  
the  
inte  
upo  
not  
oug  
or r  
to c  
ces  
tion  
betw  
justl  
ing  
logi  
und  
spiri  
ner  
V  
the  
effe  
the  
inve  
gov  
fom  
of t  
fect  
the  
I  
of R  
cial

sister

ts, purely  
belong to  
les, and in  
sole state ;  
which hu-  
man discre-  
subject of  
natures are  
ected and  
survey of  
relations to  
discovers a  
ading this  
this distri-  
men pro-  
nment ac-

of the most  
ederal gov-  
mean, as to  
cannot be  
accomplish  
d act upon  
which gives  
asure and a

representative  
he is to ad-  
enable him  
ce the whole  
ct him from  
from which  
spect. He  
se affairs in  
His know-  
elation they  
should un-  
politics of the  
sister

sister states, the general complexion and character of the people of his state, the state of its agriculture, commerce and arts, and their mutual connexions and dependencies.

There is another quality in a representative on which much stress has been laid. It has been contended that he ought to understand and participate in the feelings of the people. The principle is surely just ; but the error consists in carrying it to excess, or in not making proper distinctions in its application. It may be remarked that the feelings to be represented bear an exact relation to the interests of a people : They spring from them ; they grow upon them. But if, indeed, there are feelings, which are not formed upon these interests, it should seem that they ought not to be represented, for they must be either evil or mistaken feelings. It would hardly appear beneficial to carry into the government the irregular passions, caprices and fanciful wishes of the people. The same distinctions therefore must be supported between the feelings, as between the interests of a community : Before they can justly be represented, they must be formed into a prevailing and permanent spirit ; and in this condition, their analogy with the public interests will be established and all undue propensities sacrificed, for in the formation of this spirit, local and private passions, not involved in the general emotion are necessarily extinguished.

With respect to those qualities which are formed upon the great principles of virtue and morality, and which are essential in the character of those who are to provide for the public happiness, they are no necessary part of this investigation, since they are equally indispensable in all governments, and since the present enquiry regards persons merely in a representative capacity. In the progress of this essay, however, the importance and the most effectual means of securing the success of these qualities in the event of elections, will merit consideration.

I am now to enquire what are the most effectual means of securing the success of those qualities, which are essential in the character of a federal representative.

It is a just remark that the principles, on which any social operation is conducted, correspond to the sphere to which it is confined. The more you contract or expand this sphere, the more force and effect you give to those contracted, or to those expanded principles and affections, which are to determine the event of the operation. If it comprises an extensive portion of people, the spirit peculiar to a large body will have most influence in it; the chance of a beneficial result will be increased, by the union and concert of many minds; for the larger the number of people which can be found to combine in a measure, the greater will be the chance of that measure's being safe, liberal and productive of general good. If a person is to be elected to any important office, and the majority of a whole people are to determine his election, such a man will be chosen, as is best calculated to promote the interest of the whole people. Their object will be, not the man who is most popular in a particular district; not the man whose qualities, however estimable in themselves, are, in their kind and scope, inadequate to a complete representation of their common interests; not the man whose ambition has been merely to master the heights of a single profession or science; but that man, who possesses the universal and established confidence of the people; one whose contemplations have compassed the circle of human knowledge, and who has surveyed the connections and relations, which the interests of his country bear to each other and to every remote object that is capable of affecting them.

But it will be asked, how will their object be accomplished? Will not individuals vote with the same attachments and views, when they give in their suffrages as members of the state, as when they vote as members of a district? I answer, they certainly will not. In a simple election which pervades the whole state, the citizens will be sensible of the character in which they act; they will consider, that they are to chuse persons to represent the state, and not their particular districts; they will consider, that, as the scale of interests peculiar to a district, and that

that  
pro  
best  
ther  
part  
as t  
be i  
mer  
gen  
that  
but  
be :  
ity  
whi  
will  
dec  
T  
claf  
dent  
no l  
ever  
claf  
loca  
The  
equ  
of t  
will  
part  
the  
vie  
mu  
ove  
diff  
rate  
V  
shal  
infl  
sacri

that which embraces the whole state, bear but a small proportion to each other, those qualities, which have the best relation to the one, will entirely fall short of the other; they will consider, that the weight and influence of partial, local and personal suffrages will be diminished, as the theatre of election is extended, and will therefore be induced to sacrifice their local and private attachments, from the small hope of their success, and join the general voice of the people. I am far from pretending that the people will universally act upon this principle; but all independent and considerate men will necessarily be attended by these reflexions, and will act in conformity to them.—And this leads me to another circumstance, which will render this principle generally successful, and will eternally give to our diffusive election, a capital and decisive superiority over its rival.

The people of a state may justly be divided into two classes. One class consists of citizens, who are independent in their principles, of sound judgments, actuated by no local or personal influence, and who understand, and ever act with a view to the public good. The other class comprises all the dependent, the weak, the biassed, local, party men—the dupes of artifice and ambition. Those who compose the first class, are diffused pretty equally thro the whole community; and from the nature of their characters, are actuated by a uniform spirit, and will generally unite their views in the same objects: In particular districts, they bear not an equal proportion to the opposite party, who tho incapable of extending their views throughout the state, find in their particular communities similar objects of union; they will therefore be overpowered in any particular district, but united in a diffusive election, they will over balance those small separate combinations, which take place in the several districts.

Will an enlightened legislature adopt any measure, that shall tend to depress the power, and waste and destroy the influence of so valuable a class of citizens? Will they sacrifice liberality to prejudice, honesty to sinister design, and

which any  
sphere to  
expand  
to those  
fections,  
on. If it  
rit pecu-  
it; the  
the union  
number  
measure,  
eing safe,  
rson is to  
ority of a  
man will  
nterest of  
man who  
an whose  
, in their  
resentation  
ambition  
le profes-  
universal  
hose con-  
in know-  
nd relati-  
ach other  
ing them.  
e accom-  
ne attach-  
ffrages as  
nbers of a  
a simple  
izens will  
they will  
resent the  
consider,  
strict, and  
that

( 20 )

and independent virtue to the weakness of ignorance or the wickedness of ambition? Will they not rather establish, instead of impairing by their institutions, the ascendant of knowledge and worth in all those operations, on which the dearest interests of society depend? Surely they will not fail to cherish, in the whole spirit of their laws, the influence of that class of men whom nature has formed to protect our rights, and to secure to mankind the blessings of a wise and virtuous policy.

The division I have made, the principles upon which the two parties are supposed to act, and the result of their operation in one mode of election and in the other, is agreeable to our experience. In this state, the local combinations, the cabals of party, the intrigues of interest, and all that support of private ambition, which is the fruit of dependence and patronage, the glare of superficial qualities, and every mode of corrupt influence, has generally been baffled by that steady spirit, which true to its principles and uniform in its object, has been successful in supporting genuine and established merit, against all the forces of local opposition. The event of elections has, in many instances, struck those with surprise, who, not aware of this circumstance, and judging of the result from the strength of a prevailing party in one district, and in another, have seen those elections terminate in a manner extremely different from their expectations. Examine the course of elections in this state. Have not candidates, powerfully supported in their own counties, been frequently unsuccessful, while others, with few suffrages in their particular districts, have gained a decided superiority in the suffrages of the state together? What should occasion this, but the steady support of that class of freemen, who, regardless of those qualities which render a man popular or unpopular in a small society, are governed by a view of those general merits, which have been displayed upon the theatre of public life? Whence have our patriots and sages, whose brows have been so long encircled with the honors of their country derived those

tho  
and  
fou  
flo  
anc  
lar  
tal  
cla  
the  
ext  
  
era  
ma  
cir  
the  
the  
ca  
fo  
the  
ch  
ge  
lif  
fel  
  
the  
an  
jec  
va  
ce  
or  
T  
ti  
cu  
ar  
th  
D  
fl  
Y

ance or  
r estab-  
ascend-  
ons, on  
Surely  
of their  
ure has  
ankind

1 which  
of their  
er, is a-  
al com-  
interest,  
he fruit  
erficial  
as gen-  
ue to its  
ccessful  
ainst all  
lections  
e, who,  
e result  
district,  
ate in a  
ns. Ex-  
ave not  
ounties,  
few suf-  
decided  
? What  
at class  
ich ren-  
ety, are  
ch have  
Whence  
been so  
derived  
those

those perpetuated honors? whence, but from the calm and steady suffrages of this independent body; a pure source from which no turbid streams of public favor flow? These men have been unpopular at certain seasons, and in some districts—They have suffered almost popular persecution in some places, and have experienced total neglect in others; but have been cherished by that class of citizens, whose esteem and support never fail, till the virtues, which first prompted them, are perverted or extinguished.

The people of this state, in their elections, have generally expressed little regard to the particular place of a man's residence; they have wisely judged, that such a circumstance has no necessary or natural connection with the qualities essential in a representative of the state; they have been sensible that no peculiarity of situation can debar him from the acquisition of that general information, which renders him familiar with all parts of the state, and flow to the enquiring mind thro a thousand channels. Thus local considerations of every kind have generally given way to nobler motives, and our best qualified citizens, wherever they might be found, have been selected to fill offices of trust and honor.

Under the operation of our present system of election, the advance towards the chief honors of the state is slow and gradual. Much time is necessary to become the object of general observation and confidence—This observation will be attracted only by good conduct, in the successive stages of the progress, and this confidence ensured only by a uniform experience of talents and fidelity. Thus, in this public and prolonged trial of merit, ambition itself will contract the habits of virtue. This circumstance, I contend, is one of the most distinguished and most happy incidents of our government; and I claim the honor of it, as due to our excellent form of election. Divide the state into districts, and you leave but a single step between the lowest and the most elevated station. You take ambition by the hand, you raise her from ob-  
scurity,

scurity, and clothe her in purple. Youth and inexperience will share the laurel with intrigue, and the monster Faction, wrapped in the white robe of the candidate, will stalk along the theatre of election.

Are these the embellishments of fancy, or are they not rather a strong picture of naked nature? I would indulge no images, that were not copies of genuine reality; for I am sensible, that by reasoning alone, are my enlightened readers to be convinced. Let us enquire then whether the picture be not a faithful, as well as a strong one.

It cannot be disputed that the difficulty of creating an influence of any kind is in proportion to the number to be influenced. When the influence is a beneficial one, this difficulty cannot be very prejudicial, or inconvenient, because perseverance will at length infallibly establish it; but in case of a pernicious influence, the facility of establishing it ought to be guarded against by every possible measure: But a district election enhances the facility of this influence; it levels those discouraging obstructions, which ambition finds in compassing the favors of a large community; it contracts the sphere of her exertions, and enables her to deal out corruption in larger and more tempting portions: It entrusts the power of deciding on the merits of a candidate, to his friends, dependents, adherents, neighbors. Surely the decision must be proportionably partial and unjust: For biassed by the connections of interest, intimidated by his power, misled by the arts of his industrious agents, dazzled with the pomp of his riches, or lured by the charm of his condescending manners, they cannot, through this thick medium of prejudices, discern the true complexion of his character, and decide with that cool and impartial spirit, which commonly distinguishes the judgments of a whole people.

In a district election, the success of a candidate may depend in a great degree on the quantity of his exertions for the moment. A few emissaries judiciously distributed and aiming all the force of their intrigue at that class of men

men w  
majorit  
worth.  
for a fi  
not pos  
should  
which  
in a ge  
express  
ply hir  
the oc  
pressio  
the ex  
prejud  
with i  
that al  
are in  
can pr  
culate  
wishes  
melan  
met, i  
umph  
ambit  
what  
self?  
life, o  
terest  
daily  
of his  
will b  
of de  
suffic  
of ch  
fal co  
In  
to ac  
the p

( 23 )

men who are most susceptible of influence, may delude a majority into a false persuasion of his talents, virtue and worth. The candidate himself may become popular, for a single occasion, by qualities and means, which could not possibly establish a permanent popularity or one which should pervade a large community, and by means too, which would have a direct tendency to blast his ambition in a general election: He may (if I may be allowed the expression) discover the weak side of the society, and apply himself to it with flattering assiduity; he may seize the occasion of some prevailing passion, some strong impression of separate interest, some popular clamor against the existing administration, or some other false and fatal prejudice, and foment and foster the spirit of the day, with incredible success. He may persuade the people that all in present power, and all who seek it but himself, are in combination against their interests, that he alone can protect them, and procure such laws, as shall be calculated to support these interests and to gratify all their wishes. These and similar arts are well known, by the melancholy experience of this and other nations, to have met, in small circles of election, but too often with triumphant success. But where are the instruments which ambition shall employ to delude a large community? To what local passions or prejudices shall a man address himself? What proportion will the connections of private life, of family, of friends, and the relations of private interest bear on this extensive theatre? Who are to be the daily witnesses of his engaging deportment, and the charm of his hospitality? Surely thro such a scrutiny, a bad man will hardly pass with success; and no momentary glare of deceptive qualities, no intrigues, no exertions will be sufficient to make a whole people lose sight of those points of character which alone can entitle one to their universal confidence.

In an election by districts, the candidate has no motive to acquire those qualifications, which recommend him to the people at large, and which, it has been sufficiently proved,

proved, are the most important ones, that the representative can possess: He will be satisfied with those acquirements, which are commensurate with the views and conceptions of a majority of his district: Independent of the people of the state, he will be at no pains to obtain that general knowledge of the civil and political interests of his country, which they would demand as indispensible in his character.

It is the object of every wise government, so to calculate their laws of election, as to guard against the evil of corruption. The virtuous citizens of Connecticut have hitherto been happily free from it. If the monster has ever been admitted, he has only wandered behind the curtain, and has never dared to shew his head upon the stage. But our regulations are for posterity—Let us not then open a door, thro which a possible change of manners, may give him an easy and unrestrained entrance. Enlarge the sphere of corruption, and you render its circulation slow and spiritless: contract it, and you make it rage with redoubled virulence. To prove that this theory is agreeable to fact, I would appeal, not to the happy experience of this state, but to a striking example in Great-Britain. It is well known that the boroughs which by the constitution of that kingdom are allowed to send each two representatives to parliament, have been proverbially notorious for the most abandoned corruption; while the shires, which furnish a separate delegation, have generally acted upon more independent principles, and have in a great degree escaped the odious imputation; and the journal of the house of commons will inform us, that the conduct of their respective representatives has exhibited the same distinction. The burgessees have usually been under the influence of the crown, while the knights have been the support of the liberties of England.

But as a division of the state will be a fruitful source, and a district election the melancholy scene, of faction, dissensions and violence, it is most peculiarly to be deprecated. If the measure should be adopted, I should

view

view  
falsi  
the  
peac  
cour  
may  
ings  
is re  
I  
is n  
ted  
pos  
dift  
rifi  
der  
dift  
pro  
rest  
fla  
mit  
did  
hoc  
pas  
her  
the  
the  
occ  
jeal  
rel  
bo  
giv  
lec  
mu  
en  
fee  
nei  
ele

view it as an event, designed, in the order of nature, to falsify and defeat all those flattering presages exhibited in the circumstances of our political infancy, of the reign of peace and of the advancement of social happiness in this country. If once the spirit of faction is introduced, we may bid adieu to the spirit of improvement, and the blessings of good government. That the danger I describe is real, will appear from the following considerations.

In order to preserve tranquility in social operations, it is necessary that the public regulations should be calculated to repress the force of human passions, and give all possible efficacy to the influence of principle. But small districts of election are calculated, on the contrary, to cherish all those passions which are baneful to the free, moderate and steady deliberations of the judgment: For in districts, personal attachments, having the principal sway, produce a violent zeal: Every Elector, with some interest, or some affection to gratify, takes his side, and inflamed by opposition, pushes his exertions beyond the limits of moderation: It becomes the interest of each candidate to blacken the character of his antagonist—Falsehoods are propagated—Envy, jealousy and all the evil passions are industriously fomented, and their several adherents, entering into all the spirit of their leaders, carry their animosity to the most licentious excesses. Parts of the district thus pitted against each other, call up, on this occasion, all their private enmities, and indulge all those jealousies, which spring from their numerous disjunctive relations, the rivalries of family, and the quarrels of neighbourhood; and take advantage of the day of election to give effect to all these passions. Thus the theatre of election becomes the seat of a civil war. What invasions must not the rights of human reason suffer! What weakening attacks must not the moral system feel, from this scene of faction!

We have seen the infant operation of this spirit in a neighbouring state, which is divided into districts for the election of representatives. In one of these divisions, the

( 26 )

people under two rival banners have carried their animosities to an immoderate length—Repeated and fruitless attempts to gain the majority have but added vigour to the obstinate and unaccommodating spirit of party ; and each successive trial has left, on the features of society, new and deeper impressions of discord and disunion.

In our present mode of election, the spirit of faction is extinguished by the remoteness of the object and the extreme uncertainty of success, by the difficulty and danger of carrying the operations of intrigue over an extensive surface, and the proportionate difficulty of factious combinations. A party is formed in a particular part of the state—But with whom is that party to contend ? Neighbors will not quarrel violently about two rivals, of which neither has but a precarious chance of success—Not with another party in a remote part of the state ; for in order to warm men's passions, you must give them a near, a certain and defined object : But what imagination can give substance and figure to an enmity, which is directed against a person or society so far removed from all personal connection or clashing of private interests ? The fact is, under our excellent system, the passions have little sway : Men are not much inclined to contend in the dark, against a visionary antagonist. Thus as party spirit is repressed, Electors are left to the calm determinations of the judgment, and in that state of personal indifference, which is most favorable to the influence of liberal and rational principles.

Another great advantage that our form of election has over its rival, is the tendency of the former to unite all parts of the state together, and to promote the harmony of the whole, by that mutual dependence, and that constant relation of the parts to each other, which it produces. It is clearly the true policy of every community, in order both to preserve internal tranquility, and to improve its external force, to favor, by every possible measure, the union of its members—For this purpose, the operations of the government should be as simple and uniform, as

is

is  
p  
v  
e  
l  
o  
e  
i  
v  
t  
f  
c  
d  
b  
o  
t  
t  
t  
d  
A  
i  
f  
r  
P  
r  
c  
r  
e  
i  
r  
c  
c  
c  
c  
i  
l  
y

( 27 )

is consistent with a full and perfect administration. The powers of the state should be exercised as far as is convenient by the whole people. It becomes necessary however in order to give efficacy to the administration, to delegate these powers to smaller corporations, departments, offices ; and thus a great variety of divisions are formed, endowed with certain portions of the common authority, in the exercise of which they are independent of other divisions, and responsible only to the whole : These contract, from the habit of this distinct operation, ideas of separate rights and interests, which necessarily produce certain jealousies and rivalries ; and so far their institution derogates from the principle of union, and is justified only by the necessity of the case : To multiply them then, without this necessity, would be highly impolitic. Again, as the small departments and corporations are designed only to facilitate the administration of the common powers of that society of which they are a part, their relation to and dependence on the society should be as strict as possible. All external relations, in which the whole society is not immediately concerned, are pernicious. Now, a district for election is a political corporation erected with a direct relation to the federal government : It is to certain purposes a distinct member of the union, and is so far less a member of the state : Its dependence on the state is necessarily in some degree diminished and transferred : It is represented in Congress as an independent body. Proud of its quality and rank, it will consider itself as on a footing of equality ; it will view with complacency that connection, from which its chief glory is derived. Thus detached from the state, thus loosened from its original dependence and union, it will undervalue its interests and despise its controul. What will be the corporate influence of the state, thus split up, parcelled out, and annexed, piece meal, to the general government ? Where shall it find resources to resist encroachments ? Who that loves his country can view this picture with indifference ? Who will presume to say that the time may never come, when

the



( 29 )

nd  
 ed  
 cy  
 lif-  
 nd  
 the  
 lif-  
 ces  
 na-  
 tu-  
 of  
 me  
 it-  
 ri-  
 not  
 ov-  
 the  
 the  
 rest  
 any  
 nen  
 not  
 and  
 the  
 t or  
 erty  
 ts,  
 the  
 tex,  
 late  
 uch  
 be  
 fice  
 be-  
 po-  
 lar

pular governments, I know of few more pernicious than a too frequent change of representatives, and a consequent instability of counsels. . . Frequent elections, indeed, and a proper renewal of the representation is perhaps of the essence of political liberty, and like bile in the human body, purifies and preserves the system; but immoderate changes, and an excessive fluctuation, like a preternatural discharge of that humor, creates a malignant disease, obstructs the regular operation, and impairs the strength of the constitution. I have, in the course of this investigation, suggested a number of circumstances to prove that our mode of election is the best remedy for the evil, while it leaves to the people all the advantages of the important principle, which that evil accompanies: But an election by districts will be an endless source of instability. The peculiar liability of small communities to irregular passions has been discussed in part of this essay—It is a common maxim, that numerous bodies are most exposed to the impulses of passion. This in a qualified sense is true—It is true of assemblies collected in one place for deliberation. It is true of all select bodies chosen by the people; because, the more you enlarge the body, the greater chance there is, of introducing weak and unqualified men: But with respect to bodies that are not select, that are originally and necessarily composed of all kinds of characters, and in which the weak and ignorant, those susceptible of influence, and of irregular passions have naturally the ascendancy in point of numbers, that act also in separate departments, the maxim ought to be reversed: Enlarge the acting body, you augment the force of the wise, the uninfluenced and steady, and you divide and waste the strength of the opposite party. Certainly then, if small electing bodies are more exposed to passions than large ones, their measures will be more fluctuating. It has been sufficiently proved that small districts are more under the influence of personal motives, than general principles. They are attracted by qualities not fitted to make permanent impressions. They fluctuate according to the humour of the

( 30 )

the day, according to their partial and false conceptions of interest, according to the particular force of a candidate's exertions or intrigues, and a variety of other circumstances peculiarly incident to small societies. Compare the council of this state with the assembly. Observe the continual changes in the complexion of the latter body, and the uniformity and permanency of the former : It affords a decisive proof of my principle.

The chief arguments in favor of a district election have been drawn from the assumed principle, that all parts and all the interests of a state ought to be equally represented ; and that men, who are to legislate for the people, should possess a knowledge of all their wants and a sympathy with their feelings. These points have been occasionally hinted at. It has been shewn that to represent all these minute interests would be useless, since the laws of the general government cannot affect them ; and that as the general interests of a state have little or no relation to geographical divisions, the districts must be formed upon false or fanciful principles. But it will still be insisted on, that the distribution of property and the diversity of occupations form a great distinction in interests, and that these interests ought to be distinctly represented. One of the chief of these distinctions is found between the interests of agriculture and of commerce : It may however be safely averred that in no subject whatever, for the purpose of the argument, is a distinction more imaginary. A wise legislature ever calculates its agricultural and commercial laws upon the principle of a most perfect connection between them. As agriculture furnishes the materials, and is the foundation of commerce, so commerce gives life and spirit to agriculture. A flourishing trade necessarily improves the wealth of the farmer, by creating a demand for the products, and enhancing the value of his land : All regulations therefore, calculated for the benefit of commerce, are found to promote, by a direct and infallible relation, the interests of agriculture. These remarks, indeed, are so verified by experience, and are so

com-

com  
Upo  
light  
the i  
exam  
relat  
acqu  
deal  
givi  
trict  
mod  
you  
tura  
othe  
state  
find  
trav  
inte  
take  
size  
of a  
with  
cou  
mer  
Y  
is fa  
idei  
a m  
war  
wit  
the  
tio  
sha  
thi  
fen  
Bu  
loc  
me

( 31 )

common, that it may appear frivolous to repeat them. Upon what principle of selfish policy, then, will an enlightened merchant act, in procuring laws that may injure the interests of the landholder, or how can he, who has examined all the possible sources of his wealth, and all the relations which his profession bears to every other, be unacquainted with an interest, which is the basis of all his dealings, and the object of his daily contemplations? But, giving the distinction its utmost force, how would districts, in the state of Connecticut, be arranged, to accommodate these interests? In what part of the state would you not find a respectable commercial as well as agricultural interest? Where would the one terminate and the other begin? Where would you draw the line? In this state trade and husbandry walk hand in hand: You will find them in every village, tracing the smallest rivers, traversing the gloomiest wilds, and sitting together in the intervalles of dreary and impassable mountains. If we take any possible section of this state, of any conceivable size or shape, and form it into a district for the election of a representative, it would be difficult to conjecture, with any tolerable precision, whether, in the ordinary course of things, the successful candidate would be a merchant, a landholder, or a lawyer.

With respect to the sympathy and fellow feeling which is said to be essential in a representative, I hardly know what ideas to affix to the term. One would suppose, that if a man of virtue and benevolence is acquainted with the wants and feelings of his constituents, he must sympathize with them of course. But is it necessary that he possess the wants himself? Is any particular situation or condition indispensable in order to produce this sensibility? Shall a man be destitute of property in order to sympathize with the indigent? Enlarge the idea, and call the sentiment patriotism, and I agree that it is indispensable: But I contend that the spirit of patriotism is impaired by local sympathies, and is favored, in a popular government, by extent of private property, and by that situa-  
tion

tion, which is most proper for a comprehensive knowledge of the interests of the state.

It has been recommended by some, that the state should be divided into districts, and that the whole people of the state should have a voice in the election of each representative, in imitation of the example of Maryland. It will be remembered, that in the course of this address, I have stated a variety of considerations to prove the impolicy of the measure, even with this beneficial qualification. It will still be liable to the objection that the local interests of the district will be too much regarded. It may further be remarked, that by confining the people of the state in their choice to a particular district, you abridge them of an important right. It is a principle laid down by Mr. Hamilton, the present secretary of the treasury, that "representation is imperfect, in proportion as the current of popular favor is checked: That this great source of free government, popular election, should be perfectly pure, and the most unbounded liberty allowed, that the people ought to have it in their option, to choose their most meritorious men, and that any restriction in this respect is an abridgement of their most invaluable privilege." \*

Certain I am, that the division which has taken place in a number of the states, and the restriction of the privilege I have mentioned, have operated perniciously as to the choice of representatives. Let any man contemplate, for a moment, the complexion of the house of representatives, and he will discover some spots and blemishes, which would never have appeared on it, had the whole people of each state been allowed a free choice of men from all parts of its territory. It is painful to make the reflection, but it cannot be concealed, that some states are represented in that body, by certain individuals of their delegation, who possess qualifications vastly inferior to those of other men, excluded, by a district election, from the choice of their fellow-citizens; and who would have been left forever in obscurity, had a diffusive system

\* See debates of the New-York convention, page 20 and 40.

system of election been adopted. This remark will apply to states, which are fertile in men of eminent abilities and merit.

The situation of Connecticut is such that it would seem to be the last of all the states, which an advocate for district election would select for an experiment. Its compactness, its geographical uniformity, the simplicity of its interests, and the universal and equal distribution of population, wealth, conditions, professions, distinguish it from most of its neighbors. Some states, from their great extent, or unequal figure, from their being divided by distinct interests, or great natural boundaries, might derive a more plausible apology for the institution: Such may be the situation of Kentucke, in respect to Virginia, or Maine, in relation to Massachusetts—But these are singular cases: The argument would hardly extend, in the present state of population, to any other state in the union.

There are other material points of distinction, which render arguments drawn from the situation or the example of some states who have adopted the measure I oppose, of little force, when applied to this. The states in general have long been in a habit of an election by counties and districts—We have never been acquainted with these species of departments: In the former, therefore, the district election has the support of established usage, and preserves consistency and uniformity in the electoral system. This consideration not only furnishes an apology for the adoption, but affords an argument in support of the measure. But the usages and habits of this state are different. It will therefore not only be an abrupt departure from our antient approved customs, but it will introduce into our system such an incongruity, such a jarring of principles, as must extremely tarnish its beauty, and give it the disgusting features of a monster. It will be an unnatural transition, an innovation of a most extravagant kind: In one instance we deviate from the line of antient custom, and adhere to it in others, without any ground for the distinction. If we attempt re-

( 34 )

forms, let us carry them throughout the system to which they refer—Let us simplify, instead of distracting our forms of policy.

Thus instead of reasoning from the examples of other states, in favor of district election, we would appeal to those very examples, viewed in connection with all their circumstances, for an argument against the measure, as applicable to Connecticut. But if we are to be influenced by examples, we shall find some forcible ones in support of the practice of this state. Out of thirteen states, seven have adopted the policy of a district election. Massachusetts is divided into districts, with liberty for the electors of the district to choose their representative from all parts of the state. This qualification, while it seems to recognize the right of the people, is in fact a mere illusion. It looks like a weak attempt in the government, to transfer to the credit of the people the disgrace of a pernicious measure. It can never operate as an improvement, since the general policy of the system will forever frustrate its efficacy. The practice of Maryland presents a real and capital improvement. Had that state wisely gone one step further, and combined the above mentioned provision of Massachusetts with this peculiar improvement of their own, they would have reached the height of policy: But any one will see that such a step would have destroyed the very essence of a district election, and would have been, in fact, a complete adoption of the great principles of our system. Georgia, if I am not mistaken, has assumed a practice similar to that of Maryland. New-York, Virginia and the Carolinas have a pure district election. The practice of New-Hampshire corresponds with ours, with some trifling distinctions. But, in the instances of Pennsylvania and New-Jersey, especially the latter, we find a striking resemblance of the system of Connecticut. The former has a diffusive election, in which, every citizen votes for each representative, with this diversity, however, that all the electors of a county assemble together, and

and the event is determined by a single choice: In the latter, the people assemble in counties, and vote as in Pennsylvania, with an exception of some parts of the state, in which they elect as with us, in municipal bodies; but in order to concentrate the votes, and secure a majority, they have incorporated in their system the excellent quality of a double election. The example of New-Jersey, therefore, expresses a handsome encomium upon the practice of this state; and as far as arguments from such a source have any weight, it affords a considerable support to the policy of our institution; for such a measure is a novelty in New-Jersey, and is a deviation from the established forms and customs of the state.

I cannot reflect upon the principles and operation of our system of general election without increasing attachment and admiration. The tendency of the plan to promote union among the people; to collect the voice of a majority, by a preparatory and a definitive choice; to remedy the evils, by striking at the root of the causes of faction; to prevent the tumults incident to large popular assemblies, by the peaceful, silent operation of small municipal departments; to drain the sluices, and waste the power of corruption, by enlarging its sphere, and diversifying its objects; this various tendency, I say, composes a mass of merit, which distinguishes the system, and gives it a decided superiority. In most other states, popular election is a scene of tumult and riot: Much time is devoted to a business, which is here dispatched in a few hours, and in the greatest tranquility. In order to collect to some degree of precision the random suffrages of the people, election tickets, or lists of candidates are made out, and circulated thro the county or district with incredible industry and zeal; and every means, even the most unwarrantable and indecent, are employed to support the one and the other—A poor substitute, indeed, for our double form of election.

The election of representatives in Congress by the state at large, has many arguments, which would not apply,  
in

( 36 )

in regard to the council of this state. Those arguments are chiefly drawn from the nature of the objects of their appointment, which have, been sufficiently illustrated. But, on the other hand, there is a most conclusive argument, against electing the counsellors by districts, derived also from the peculiar object and design of that body. The council, in their legislative capacity, is intended as a check to the popular impulses of the representative branch, and to correct the results of a hasty deliberation, and the error of imprudent measures : In this view, the council should possess the essential qualities of simplicity, stability, union, independence of local attachments or popular influence : It should have the *esprit du corps*, the spirit of an independent body, which alone can ensure that steadiness, firmness and wisdom in the administration of the government, to which the institution of a senate, in every republic, will be eternally indispensable. With all these qualities, an election by districts would be entirely incompatible.

I am perfectly sensible that our law, regulating the election of representatives in Congress, requires some amendments in respect to form ; and it is to be hoped that the legislature, in their wisdom, will think proper to revise it, and enact a more explicit and compleat one ; but the fundamental principles of the system, it were earnestly to be wished, might never be invaded.

I am sensible also, that the constitution of this state is susceptible of a great number of fundamental improvements ; and I look forward, with an anxious heart, to that mature and happy season, when the spirit of people will admit of a great and radical reform, by their own delegates commissioned for this express purpose. I am aware that the policy of assembling a convention, and establishing a form of government, superior to the powers of the legislature, has been called in question by some ; and in particular, has been ingeniously controverted by a writer of our own state, whose merit I have in high estimation. But whatever influence his reasonings might have

( 37 )

have in my mind, in respect to the strictness of principle, I must acknowledge, I should despair of ever seeing a complete reform in the political establishments of this state accomplished in the ordinary course of legislation. The question then in my mind is whether the great and pressing importance of renovating a defective and unbalanced government will not justify a departure from that strict political principle, on which the legislature would claim all the powers of the community.

But I will not trespass on the patience or offend the taste of my readers, by indulging speculations, which have no immediate relation to the proper subject of this essay.

Thus, I have with that serious attention, which the important subject merits, and which is indispensable in all addresses to a venerable legislature, and a respectable public, endeavored to prove, that a division of this state into districts for the election of representatives in Congress would be a measure inconsistent with the rights of the people, and productive of most unhappy consequences. It is a subject in which, as a member of this great community and anxious for its honor and felicity, I feel deeply interested. The impressions and the principles, which dictated this address, I can answer for. The errors, which may attend it, will meet with a candid treatment from a generous public. I will submit to a fair refutation of them, not only with patience, but with pleasure.

A CITIZEN OF CONNECTICUT.

---