



Section 3

SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE *Analyzing Issues*

One major issue the framers of the Constitution faced was the role of national government. Read the passage about the issues surrounding the division of powers and then fill out the chart below to help you analyze the issue. (See Skillbuilder Handbook, p. 916.)

The new United States foundered under the Articles of Confederation, as states acted in their own self-interest. Congress had no power to raise money to pay off debts from the war, and efforts to protect the country against foreign powers met with no support from the states. It became obvious to many that the fear of creating a strong central government had resulted in a government that was incapable of running the country successfully.

In 1787, fifty-five delegates met in Philadelphia to try to strengthen the Articles of Confederation. Most of the delegates had been deeply involved with the struggle for independence and had experience with governing or developing policies for the new United States. They shared a nationalist perspective. That is, they believed that unless the national government were freed from control by

the states' legislatures, the country would fall victim to foreign aggression or would simply fall apart.

While most delegates realized the necessity for a strong central government, they also shared with other Americans a deep-seated fear of tyranny by a strong leader or group. Traditionally, Europeans had immigrated to America to get away from harsh central governments that were unresponsive to the needs of the people and denied them freedom. The Revolutionary War had been fought to gain independence from a distant king who had no concept of or interest in the needs and welfare of the colonists. Many Americans worried that a strong national government in the new nation would be far away from many parts of the country. In a time when travel was often difficult and news traveled slowly, a distant central government might have trouble being responsive to local needs.

PROBLEMS: What problems were caused by the Articles of Confederation?

NEEDS: What major change was needed?

FEARS: What form of government did Americans most fear? Why?