

Debating the New Constitution



ABOUT THE SOURCE The proposed Constitution of 1787 created a strong national government with many powers. Federalists supported the document. They believed a strong government was necessary for the survival of the nation. Antifederalists opposed the Constitution. They held that a strong central government would lead to tyranny. Leaders from both sides debated the proposed powers to be given to the federal government.



*As you read note the concerns that Hamilton and Henry have about the national government. The following words may be new to you: **requisite**, **exigencies**, **procured**, **unavailing**, **impunity**. You may want to use a dictionary to look them up.*

The Federalist No. 31: Alexander Hamilton

Hamilton wrote the following article, dated January 1, 1788, explaining why the federal government should have the power of taxation.

A government ought to contain in itself every power **requisite** to the full accomplishment of the objects committed to its care, and to the complete execution of the trusts for which it is responsible; free from every other control, but a regard to the public good and to the sense of the people.

As the duties of superintending the national defence and of securing the public peace against foreign or domestic violence, involve a provision for casualties and dangers, to which no possible limits can be assigned, the power of making that provision ought to know no other bounds than the **exigencies** of the nation and the resources of the community.

As revenue is the essential engine by which the means of answering the national exigencies must be **procured**, the power of procuring that article in its full extent, must necessarily be comprehended in that of providing for those exigencies.

As theory and practice conspire to prove that the power of procuring revenue is **unavailing**, when exercised over the States in their collective capacities, the Federal government must of necessity be invested with an unqualified power of taxation in the ordinary modes.

Source: *The Federalist Papers*

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What does Hamilton believe about the nation's current system of raising revenue?

Creating a New Government**Primary Source****Antifederalist No. 34: Patrick Henry**

In a speech at the Virginia ratifying convention on June 5, 1788, Patrick Henry explained why the national government should not have the power to tax.

In this scheme of energetic government, the people will find two sets of tax-gatherers—the state and the federal sheriffs. This, it seems to me, will produce such dreadful oppression as the people cannot possibly bear. The federal sheriff may commit what oppression, make what distresses, he pleases, and ruin you with impunity; for how are you to tie his hands? Have you any sufficiently decided means of preventing him from sucking your blood by speculations, commissions, and fees? Thus thousands of your people will be most shamefully robbed: our state sheriffs, those unfeeling blood-suckers, have, under the watchful eye of our legislature, committed the most horrid and barbarous ravages on our people. . . .

. . . if sheriffs, thus immediately under the eye of our state legislature and judiciary, have dared to commit these outrages, what would they not have done if their masters had been at Philadelphia or New York?

Source: *The Antifederalist Papers*

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. How does Henry believe that state and federal tax collectors would be similar? How does he believe they would differ?

MAKE A COMPARISON

1. How do Hamilton and Henry use fear to advance their arguments?

2. How do Hamilton's concerns about the national government contrast from Henry's concerns about the national government?
