

Federalist Paper Number One

After the Constitution was written, it had to be ratified by all the states. The Federalist Papers were written to persuade and inform people of the content and merit of the Constitution. Federalist Paper Number One was written by Alexander Hamilton. Notice his language about the importance of philanthropy, or citizen action for the common good.

1. After an unequivocal experience of the inefficiency of the subsisting federal government, you
2. are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The
3. subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than
4. the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the
5. fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently
6. remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct
7. and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or
8. not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever
9. destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth
10. in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in
11. which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act may, in this
12. view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind. This idea will add the
13. inducements of philanthropy to those of patriotism, to heighten the solicitude which all
14. considerate and good men must feel for the event. Happy will it be if our choice should be
15. directed by a judicious estimate of our true interests, unperplexed and unbiased by
16. considerations not connected with the public good. But this is a thing more ardently to be
17. wished than seriously to be expected. The plan offered to our deliberations affects too many
18. particular interests, innovates upon too many local institutions, not to involve in its
19. discussion a variety of objects foreign to its merits, and of views, passions and prejudices
20. little favorable to the discovery of truth

Questions

What was Hamilton referring to in line 1, when he mentioned the, “inefficiency of the subsisting federal government” How did the Constitution rectify these issues?

In lines 4 and 5, Hamilton refers to the American union as, “in many respects the most interesting in the world”. What aspects of the Constitution make America an interesting place?



Interpret the meaning behind what is written in lines 12-14. What is philanthropy and why is it an essential and necessary democratic principle?

