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# Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism

Saul Cornell

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Historical accounts of the ratification of the federal Constitution have viewed Anti-Federalism through the eyes of the leading political figures who opposed adoption of the new frame of government. By focusing too narrowly on the delegates to the state ratifying conventions and leading Anti-Federalist politicians, studies of ratification have underestimated the depth of hostility to the new Constitution characteristic of grass-roots Anti-Federalism. Discussions of Anti-Federalist political thought have also been obscured by the tendency to treat Anti-Federalism as a monolithic ideology.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Progressive Era, historians have vigorously debated who was more democratic: the Anti-Federalists or their Federalist opponents. Neo-progressive historians like Jackson Turner Main have cast the Anti-Federalists as the first genuine democratic populists and the Federalists as opponents of further democratization of American society. Against this view, consensus historians have generally followed the lead of Cecelia M. Kenyon who claimed that the Anti-Federalists were “men of little faith” who distrusted the common people as much as their elected representatives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful corrective to treatment of the Anti-Federalists as a monolithic entity, see John P. Kaminski, “Antifederalism and the Perils of Homogenized History: A Review Essay,” *Rhode Island History*, 42 (Feb. 1983), 30–37. On the different connotations of the hyphenated and unhyphenated spellings (Antifederalist or anti-Federalist), see Forrest McDonald, “The Anti-Federalists, 1781–1789,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 46 (Spring 1963), 206–14. The former usage implies substantial uniformity among opponents of the Constitution; the latter suggests little unity beyond a common antipathy to the Federalists’ scheme of government. I have not followed McDonald’s use of the lowercase *a* in “anti” because I believe that it has the effect of denying commonalities among opponents of the Constitution. In this article I have adopted the term *Anti-Federalist* as middle position between the two poles. When considering an abstract political theory derived from the opposition I have employed the term *Anti-Federalism*.

<sup>2</sup> Although the Anti-Federalist elite may have been no more democratic than leading Federalists, rank-and-file Anti-Federalists were democrats according to Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution*,

To understand the thinking of the opponents of the Constitution, especially their attitude toward democracy, we must abandon the idea that Anti-Federalists were united by a single, homogeneous political creed. Instead, we must identify the various subgroups within the Anti-Federalist ranks and explore the various ideologies that led individuals to oppose the Constitution.

Gouverneur Morris, an ardent nationalist member of the Constitutional Convention, confided in George Washington, "I dread the cold and sour temper of the back counties" toward the new frame of government.<sup>3</sup> Contemporaries on both sides of the ratification debate readily conceded that hostility toward the new Constitution was most intense among the farmers who populated the interior regions of the country.<sup>4</sup>

While east/west tensions accounted for much of the animosity felt by backcountry folk toward the Constitution, it is also important to acknowledge the role of class antagonisms in shaping a distinctive populist variant of Anti-Federalist ideology. Even among backcountry opponents of the Constitution there were important divisions. While traveling in western Pennsylvania, Thomas Rodney, a leading Delaware Anti-Federalist, noted that "the better sort. . . seem much afraid of the Foederal constitution in its present form without a bill of rights" while "the inferior class are totally against it, from their current Sentiment against proud & Lordly Idea's." Rodney's distinction between the attitudes of the Anti-Federalist elite and those of the popular opposition to the Constitution provides an important starting point for any interpretation of Anti-Federalist ideology.<sup>5</sup>

The leading Anti-Federalist representatives of the western interests, individuals like William Findley, were among the most democratic figures in Pennsylvania poli-

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1781-1788 (Chapel Hill, 1961). On the need to separate elite from popular political thought in the ratification struggle, see Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (Glencoe, 1960). For the consensus view that Anti-Federalists were no more democratic than the Federalists, see Cecelia M. Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 12 (Jan. 1955), 3-43; Martin Diamond, "Democracy and *The Federalist*: A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent," *American Political Science Review*, 53 (March 1959), 52-68; and James H. Hutson, "Country, Court, and Constitution: Antifederalism and the Historians," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 38 (July 1981), 337-68. Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago, 1981), argues that the Anti-Federalists were somewhat more democratic than their opponents since they feared society's rulers more than they feared the people.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the most important documents relating to ratification in Pennsylvania have been reprinted in Merrill Jensen et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (16 vols., Madison, 1976-). See esp. II, 206-7. See also the sources in the microform supplement to the Pennsylvania volume.

<sup>4</sup> Orin Grant Libby, *The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution, 1787-8* (Madison, 1894), demonstrated that Anti-Federalist strength was concentrated in the interior of the country. Besides the backcountry violence in Pennsylvania, discussed in this article, there were other backcountry protests during the battle over ratification, including incidents in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Rhode Island. Opposition in the South Carolina backcountry is described in Aedanus Burke to John Lamb, June 23, 1788, John Lamb Papers (New-York Historical Society, New York, New York). The Dobbs County, North Carolina, election riot is discussed by Robert A. Rutland, *The Ordeal of the Constitution: The Antifederalists and the Ratification Struggle of 1787-1788* (Norman, 1966), 271-274. On backcountry Anti-Federalist protest in Rhode Island, see *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 12, 1788. The relative lack of interest in backcountry Anti-Federalism in recent scholarship contrasts with the proliferation of studies about other aspects of backcountry political culture. For an overview of those studies, see Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750-1800," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (Oct. 1989), 641-70.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Rodney Journal, May 10, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 676.

tics. Yet despite their democratic sympathies, men like Findley were members of a recognizable political elite, even if they were far closer to the social status of the people they represented than were members of the more established eastern political elites. The individuals who served in state government were members of a mediating class that stood well above the common folk. To uncover grass-roots Anti-Federalist thinking it is essential to move beyond the lesser elite who dominated politics in the backcountry and to restore a voice to a segment of Anti-Federalism that has been rendered mute by the elitist bias of previous scholarship.<sup>6</sup>

The Carlisle Riot of 1788 affords a rich occasion for comparing the ideology of Anti-Federalists of the better and inferior sorts. Since violence in backcountry Pennsylvania attracted the attention of prominent Anti-Federalist politicians, the riot and its aftermath provide an unusual opportunity to contrast popular and elite attitudes among the opponents of the new Constitution. Furthermore, since events in Carlisle were often linked to Shays's Rebellion in the minds of contemporaries, rural unrest in backcountry Pennsylvania can also reveal the depth of concern over anarchy that united the Federalist and the Anti-Federalist political elites.

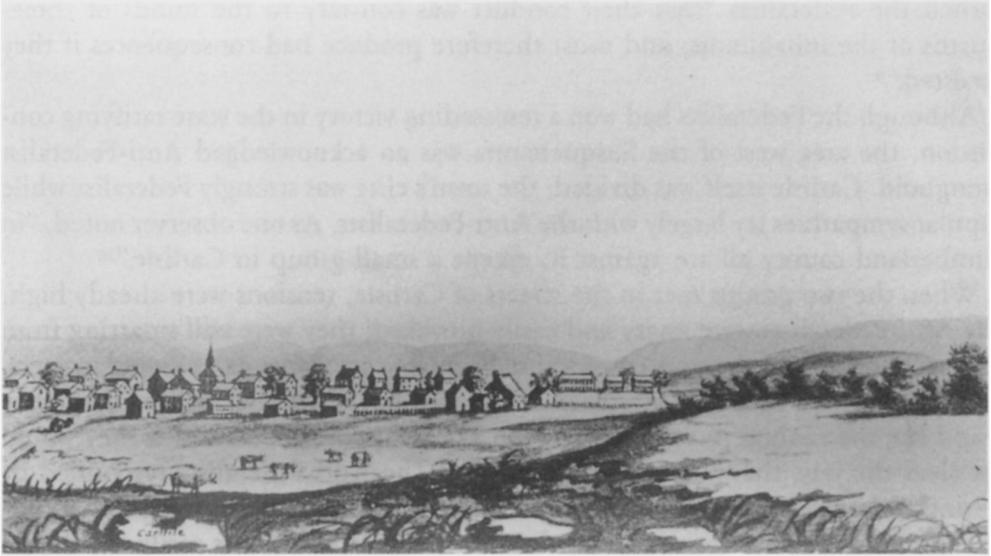
### The Carlisle Riot

Located roughly a third of the way across Pennsylvania, the town of Carlisle had, during the 1760s, marked the state's western boundary. During the subsequent years the town became a major settlement in the interior of Pennsylvania. Although it had ceased to mark the frontier and could by the mid-1780s boast both a newspaper and a college, leading gentlemen still expressed concern over the town's continuing frontier character.

Local politics in Carlisle were colored by the intensity of partisan conflict throughout Pennsylvania. The area west of the Susquehanna, including Carlisle, was a stronghold of the egalitarian political traditions associated with the state constitution of 1776. Much of the controversy in Pennsylvania politics during the decade after the Revolution revolved around proposals to revise the state constitution and replace its unicameral legislature with a bicameral system. At the root of this conflict was an argument about the role of representation in a republican government.<sup>7</sup> The debate turned on the question of how much democracy could be sustained in a republic before it would degenerate into mobocracy, tyranny, or aristocracy. Leading citizens in Carlisle, like many notable political figures throughout the United States who would support the Federalist cause, were concerned about the destabilizing impact of the more democratic aspects of revolutionary ideology on American society.

<sup>6</sup> On William Findley's political thought, see Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman et al. (Chapel Hill, 1987), 69–109.

<sup>7</sup> On Pennsylvania politics, see Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776–1790* (Harrisburg, 1942); Douglas M. Arnold, "Political Ideology and the Internal Revolution in Pennsylvania: 1776–1790" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1976); and Richard A. Ryerson, "Republican Theory and Partisan Reality in Revolutionary Pennsylvania: Toward a New View of the Constitutionalist Party," in *Sovereign States in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, 1981), 95–133.



A view of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, c. 1797. The spire marks the site of the courthouse.  
*Courtesy Dickinson College, Special Collections.*

Like their counterparts in other parts of the country, nationalists in Carlisle sought to counter the forces of democratization by championing the idea of ordered liberty, a deferential conception of politics, and the ideal of disinterested republican virtue. These positions set them against the popular traditions of egalitarianism that had played a crucial role in the revolutionary struggle against Britain and that typified grass-roots Anti-Federalism. The debate over ratification of the federal Constitution brought the two opposing political cultures into direct conflict in the streets of Carlisle.<sup>8</sup>

At about five o'clock in the evening on December 26, 1787, a group of Federalists gathered in Carlisle's center for a celebration marking Pennsylvania's ratification of the new federal Constitution. The mood was festive: drums beat and bells rang as Federalists awaited the cannon salute that would honor the new Constitution. The celebratory mood shifted, however, when an angry crowd of Anti-Federalists came on the scene and ordered the Federalists to disband. Confident in the superiority of their cause and undaunted by their opponents, the Federalists resolutely stood their ground. One of the Federalist organizers of the event responded to the provocations of the Anti-Federalists with the charge "that he hoped people so pregnant with liberty as they appeared to be would not wish to hinder their neighbors." His pleas were brushed aside by the Anti-Federalists, who refused to allow the opposition to proceed with their victory display. The leaders of the Anti-Federalist crowd

<sup>8</sup> Most of the important documents relating to the Carlisle riot are reprinted in Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 670–708. Many additional sources relevant to the riot appear in the microform supplement to the Pennsylvania volume.

warned the Federalists “that their conduct was contrary to the minds of three-fourths of the inhabitants, and must therefore produce bad consequences if they persisted.”<sup>9</sup>

Although the Federalists had won a resounding victory in the state ratifying convention, the area west of the Susquehanna was an acknowledged Anti-Federalist stronghold. Carlisle itself was divided; the town’s elite was strongly Federalist while popular sympathies lay largely with the Anti-Federalists. As one observer noted, “in Cumberland county all are against it, except a small group in Carlisle.”<sup>10</sup>

When the two groups met in the streets of Carlisle, tensions were already high. The Anti-Federalists were angry and easily provoked; they were still smarting from their recent defeat in the state convention. Federalist arrogance exacerbated matters. When confronted by local Anti-Federalist opposition, Federalists insisted that “they would fire the cannon in spite of any who would oppose them; and if they would not clear the way, they would blow them up.” The Anti-Federalists responded by pelting Federalists with pieces of wood and the confrontation escalated into a full-scale riot. Armed with staves and bludgeons, the Anti-Federalists easily routed the Federalists and drove them from the scene.

At noon the next day, the Federalists gathered once more to celebrate; this time the heavily armed group succeeded in hailing the new government with a volley of musket fire and an artillery salute. Afterwards, the Federalists retired to a tavern where they toasted leading Federalists, the new frame of government, and the future prosperity of the United States. Carlisle Federalists raised their glasses to demonstrate their respect for order and their deference to their leaders, men like George Washington and James Wilson. They praised the prospects of greatness awaiting a powerful federal union, when “the flag of the United States” would “fly triumphant in all the ports of the world.” The Federalists attacked the actions of the “vile rabble,” decried the unruly behavior of their opponents, and proclaimed “that every lover of good order” would lament the actions of the Anti-Federalist mob.<sup>11</sup>

In response to the Federalist demonstration, the Anti-Federalists mounted a counterdemonstration. Led by a local militia captain, the opponents of the Constitution staged a procession complete with effigies of James Wilson and of Pennsylvania’s chief justice, Thomas McKean, men who had helped secure ratification in Pennsylvania. The Federalist leaders were treated as the leaders of a conspiracy to foist an aristocratic government on the people. Such treachery demanded severe punishment, and the Anti-Federalist crowd overlooked no detail in preparing the figures for public judgment. The two effigies were dressed in garb appropriate to their high stations. A local Federalist reported that “the Effigie of the Chief Justics was pretty well Dressed a good Coat but not black a pretty good hat & wig & Ruffd Shirt.” The crowd jeered as the figures of the two Federalists were paraded through town in a cart and repeatedly lashed. After being humiliated before the assembled

<sup>9</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 671, 675.

<sup>10</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 26, 1788.

<sup>11</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 672–73, 681.

crowd, the two effigies were hanged and then delivered to a funeral pyre while "the dead bell tolled until they were totally consumed to ashes."<sup>12</sup>

One Anti-Federalist explained the actions of the rioters as a natural reaction to the Federalists' refusal to call "a town meeting, to take the sense of the people on the subject." In the view of Anti-Federalists, the supporters of the Constitution had disregarded the feelings of local inhabitants, acted contrary to the will of the local majority, and revealed their own arrogant contempt of the people.<sup>13</sup>

Anti-Federalists in Carlisle showed little interest in the vision of national greatness that inspired many Federalists. Rather than accept the Federalist ideal of a large republican empire administered by a small elite, Anti-Federalists defended the ideal of a confederation of small republics in which republican liberty and popular participation were the defining characteristics of political life. The nature of the Anti-Federalists' political protest provides one measure of the ideological distance separating them from Federalists. Not content to defer to their social betters, local Anti-Federalists drew upon popular traditions of "rough music" to express their resentment against the elitism of their opponents. An essential feature of the plebeian cultural traditions of the Anglo-American world, the rituals of rough music, such as tarring and feathering, were usually administered to individuals who had violated commonly accepted community values.<sup>14</sup>

The ritual use of effigies by the rioters was designed to affirm the values of community, equality, and democracy. The public humiliation of the figures of Wilson and McKean provided a focus for popular animosity and allowed the protesters in Carlisle to identify two individuals who, they believed, were leaders in the Federalists' attempt to foist an aristocratic government on the people. The two Federalist leaders were subjected to a symbolic trial and executed for conspiring to undermine the liberty of the people. Like legal punishment, the ritual was designed to reaffirm the values of the community and to provide a warning. In the minds of the protesters, the battle to defeat the Constitution was not yet over. Their actions sent a message to others who might contemplate similar betrayals of the people's trust.

The colorful plebeian rituals of status reversal enacted by Anti-Federalists also served to undercut the deferential political message implicit in Federalist ideology. Anti-Federalists reacted angrily to the aristocratic leanings of their opponents and took every opportunity to berate Federalists for their "proud and Lordly" ideas. Many Anti-Federalists resented the attempt by the Federalists to use the prestige of great men to gain support for the Constitution. One participant in the riot, sar-

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 675, 678; see also microform supplement, doc. nos. 271, 409.

<sup>13</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, microform supplement, doc. no. 409.

<sup>14</sup> Popular plebeian traditions are discussed by E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, 50 (Feb. 1971), 76-136; E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (Summer 1974), 382-405; and Alfred F. Young, "English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism," in *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*, ed. Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (London, 1984), 185-212. On the crowd in America, see Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1756-1776* (New York, 1972); Edward Countryman, "The Problem of the Early American Crowd," *Journal of American Studies*, 7 (April 1973), 77-90; and Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill, 1987).

castically assuming the voice of his Federalist opponents, suggested that “the names of Washington and a Franklin, must be rung in the people’s ears.” He further advised that “it must be declared a crime bordering on blasphemy, to say any thing against the production of such men as these.”<sup>15</sup>

The actions of the rioters were an explicit rejection of Federalist pleas for deference. The men who took to the streets in Carlisle accepted the warning of the influential Anti-Federalist author “Centinel,” who noted that “the wealthy and ambitious . . . in every community think they have a right to lord it over their fellow creatures.” Indeed, they followed his advice quite literally and refused “to yield an implicit assent to the opinions of those characters.” Anti-Federalists in Carlisle would not defer to their “betters.” The rioters proudly asserted that they “would pay no respect to their rank, nor make any allowance for their delicate constitutions,” adding that “it was laughable to see Lawyers, Doctors, Colonels, Captains & c. & c. leave the scene of their rejoicing in such haste.”<sup>16</sup>

With the community bitterly divided by the riot, local authorities faced a difficult problem: Should the instigators of the riot, the Anti-Federalists, be prosecuted to the full extent of the law or should the incident be forgotten in the hope of restoring harmony to the community? The prospect of a divisive trial did not appeal to a number of leading Federalists. A prominent Philadelphia merchant, Walter Stewart, warned William Irvine, a Carlisle Federalist, that they should not be so “very Ridiculous as to blow up a Coal which Now seems expiring; by Investigating them, or Calling to Account any of the People concern’d in the Affair at Carlisle.” Nonetheless, depositions were taken, and on January 23, 1788, a warrant for the arrest of the leaders of the Anti-Federalist mob was issued.<sup>17</sup>

The twenty-one men named in the writ were rounded up for prosecution and charged with assembling “in a riotous, routous, and unlawful manner” and fomenting “great terror and disturbance on the inhabitants of the said borough of Carlisle.” The presiding judge in the case offered the defendants the opportunity to leave jail on bail. Seven prisoners refused the offer, proclaiming that since “they were prosecuted to gratify party spite, they were determined not to enter bail on the occasion.”<sup>18</sup>

Local Anti-Federalists turned to the community for support. Organizing themselves through the militia, the Anti-Federalists elected representatives to meet with local Federalist leaders and negotiate the release of the jailed Anti-Federalists. A

<sup>15</sup> Aristocrotis [William Petrikin], *The Government of Nature Delineated; or, An Exact Picture of the New Federal Constitution* (1788), in *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (6 vols., Chicago, 1981), III, 196–213. Storing failed to identify the author as William Petrikin. For evidence supporting the attribution, see Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 674.

<sup>16</sup> [Samuel Bryan], “Centinel,” in *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 137. The “Centinel” was among the most widely distributed Anti-Federalist works and was especially popular among Carlisle Anti-Federalists. William Petrikin, a leader of the riot, wrote to a prominent Pennsylvania Anti-Federalist to request “a few of the Centinels” since “they are much admired here.” William Petrikin to John Nicholson, Feb. 24, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 695; *ibid.*, microform supplement, doc. no. 409.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Stewart to William Irvine, Jan. 30, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 380.

<sup>18</sup> Pennsylvania Supreme Court to Sheriff Charles Leeper, Jan. 23, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 685. The prisoners’ statement is reprinted, *ibid.*, 700.

number of respectable persons on both sides of the question, fearful of further violence, signed a petition to release the prisoners. After the agreement was formally ratified, a contingent of militia numbering between two hundred and fifty and fifteen hundred men marched to the jail to secure the release of the prisoners, singing a song composed by the rioters that mocked the Federalists' aristocratic bearing. Once released, the prisoners joined the front of the procession and "marched through town huzzaing, singing, hallooing, firing and the like." Federalists breathed a sigh of relief; a violent confrontation had been averted and they contented themselves by expressing their contempt for the "dirty, rag-a-muffin-looking blackguards" in private. Anti-Federalists rejoiced at their symbolic victory. The huge crowd that marched on the jail to secure the release of prisoners was a visible affirmation of the strength of the Anti-Federalist cause. The parade provided another occasion to humiliate their opponents and thereby to demonstrate popular hostility toward the Federalist vision of order and deference.<sup>19</sup>

Political rituals provide one set of clues that help reveal the underlying political dynamic at work in Carlisle. While Federalists engaged in rituals of deference, the Anti-Federalists employed rituals of status reversal. Contemporary observers on both sides of the ratification debate were struck by the clear class divisions that separated Federalists from Anti-Federalists in the Pennsylvania backcountry. The hostility to the new Constitution was most acute among men of the "lower and middling sort." One hostile observer noted that rioters were small property holders who "have but few lots."<sup>20</sup>

Anti-Federalists did not deny their humble origins and modest wealth. Anti-Federalists in Carlisle stressed the nobility and dignity of simple farmers and artisans against the attempts by Federalists to assert the superiority of gentlemen of wealth and education.

Evidence obtained from the 1787 tax lists for Carlisle provides an unusual opportunity to assess the social origins of Anti-Federalism in one backcountry locality. (See table 1.) The Carlisle rioters represented a cross section of the population that ranged from freemen to moderately prosperous yeomen. Anti-Federalists who signed petitions to gain the release of the rioters tended to be somewhat better-off and were concentrated within the ranks of the middling and the prosperous yeomanry. Anti-Federalism in Carlisle, however, drew its most vocal support from the lower and middling inhabitants of the town. By contrast, Federalists who signed the same petition were largely drawn from the wealthiest stratum of Carlisle society. The median assessed tax for those Federalists was roughly four times as much as that of Anti-Federalist petitioners and roughly seven times that of the jailed rioters. Both the striking class-conscious rhetoric of the rioters and the tax lists suggest that there

<sup>19</sup> For the petition signed by respectable persons, see *ibid.*, 708. For details of the prisoners' release, see *ibid.*, 699. Estimates of the crowd that marched to the jail to secure the release of prisoners vary from 250 to 1500, see *ibid.*; John Montgomery to James Wilson, March 2, 1788, *ibid.*, 701-6; John Shippen to Joseph Shippen, March 3, 1788, *ibid.*, 706-7; and *ibid.*, microform supplement, doc. nos. 491, 544, 554, 556, 629, 652.

<sup>20</sup> "John Penn's Journal of a Visit to Reading, Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Lancaster in 1788," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 3 (1879), 284-95, esp. 292. Montgomery to Benjamin Rush, June 12, 1787, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 691.

**Table 1**  
**Median Level of Assessed Tax for Selected Taxpayers in Carlisle, 1787**

<i>Group</i>	<i>Median Tax (£)</i>	<i>Interquartile Range (£)</i>	<i>N</i>
All taxpayers (includes freemen and householders)	68.6	19.7–176.2	281
Householders	100.0	50.0–229.35	226
Federalist petitioners	749.1	322.8–802.69	9
Anti-Federalist petitioners	187.0	93.6–245.6	8
Anti-Federalist rioters	103.8	27.5–125.3	14

SOURCE: Cumberland County Tax Lists 1787, microfilm copy (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia).

NOTE: The assessment was made in pounds; I have converted shillings to a decimal figure in pounds. The interquartile range represents the range over which the central 50 percent of the data is spread.

was an important class dimension to the struggle between Federalists and Anti-Federalists in Carlisle.<sup>21</sup>

### Anti-Federalism and Plebeian Populism

Opposition to aristocracy was a central concern in the rhetoric and symbolism of the Anti-Federalist Carlisle rioters. The charge that the Constitution was an aristocratic document was among the accusations most often repeated in the Anti-Federalist press. One astute, but admittedly sarcastic, Federalist commentator felt that Anti-Federalist writing could be reduced to a simple recipe that included the following proportions: “WELL-BORN, nine times—*Aristocracy*, eighteen times . . . *Great Men*, six times.” The author reminded readers that “these *words* will bear . . . being served, after being once used, a dozen times to the same table and palate.” A survey of the popular press in Pennsylvania in the four months between the publication of the Constitution in September and the Carlisle riot confirms the observations of that anonymous Federalist. (See table 2.)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cumberland County Tax Lists 1781, microfilm copy (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia). Only 14 of 21 rioters were found on the Carlisle tax lists. The 7 missing individuals may have been either too poor to make it onto the evaluations or nonresidents. The names of Federalist and Anti-Federalist petitioners were obtained from a petition signed by respectable persons associated with each side, and the names of the rioters were obtained from the arrest warrant, see notes 16 and 15 above. Figures for householders were obtained by excluding from the tax lists the figures for freemen (that is, nonhouseholders).

<sup>22</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, XIV, 103. Several charges often appeared within a particular text. In discussing Anti-Federalist rhetoric, I have attempted to remain faithful to the categories outlined in the “Anti federal Recipe.” Anti-aristocratic sentiment was defined by attacks on the tendency of the Constitution to promote the creation of an aristocracy composed of elected officials. Attempts to portray the new govern-

**Table 2**  
Frequency of Selected Accusations in Anti-Federalist Rhetoric<sup>a</sup>

<i>Category</i>	%
Aristocracy	49
Well born	35
Great names	23

SOURCE: These figures are based upon content analysis of 80 Anti-Federalist attacks on the Constitution or its supporters published in the Pennsylvania press between September 26 and December 26, 1787, appearing in Merrill Jensen et al., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (16 vols., Madison, 1976–), and its microform supplement.

<sup>a</sup> Since each article usually contained more than one epithet, the percentages listed above add up to more than 100%.

The author of the mock recipe for an Anti-Federalist essay distinguished between attacks on the Constitution's tendency to promote an aristocracy and a crudely formulated class critique directed at the "well born" and "great men." He thereby implicitly acknowledged a distinction that contemporaries often made between the concepts of aristocracy and natural aristocracy.

The difference between attacks on aristocracy and those on natural aristocracy illustrates an aspect of the ratification debate that has often been confused in recent scholarly discussions. One could attack the new Constitution for concentrating too much power in the hands of government and thus establishing an aristocracy of governmental officials, or one could attack the Constitution for favoring the interests of a specific social class, loosely defined as the natural aristocracy. The difference between the two critiques is crucial to understanding Anti-Federalism as a heterogeneous ideology. Concern about the dangers of aristocracy was a republican commonplace and was closely tied to the fear of corruption that was central to republican discourse. Virtually all Americans accepted the legitimacy of that concern even if they disagreed about how to guard against such danger. The problem of natural aristocracy was far more complicated and politically divisive.<sup>23</sup>

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ment as a system designed to favor the interests of a distinctive social class of natural aristocrats or the better sort were grouped under accusations against the "well born." Objections to Federalist appeals for deference to prominent gentlemen, such as George Washington or Benjamin Franklin, were classified under appeals to "great names." These numbers do not tell us about the impact of various ideas on readers. Among the Carlisle rioters, it is possible to determine that they greatly esteemed "Centinel." All of the themes noted above were forcefully articulated by "Centinel" who conformed to the "Anti federal Recipe" with particular success. On the popularity of this essay among Carlisle Anti-Federalists, see Petrikin to Nicholson, Feb. 24, 1788, *ibid.*, II, 695.

<sup>23</sup> Anti-Federalist attacks on the "well born," and "natural aristocracy" are excellent examples of E. P. Thompson's notion that class struggle may occur even if a modern social class structure is not yet fully formed; see E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class," *Social History*, 3 (May 1978), 133–66. The ambiguity of eighteenth-century terms like lower, middling, and better sort is an index of the inchoate nature of class formation in this period. On Thompson's notion of class, see Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago, 1982). For a disputing of the claim that Anti-Federalists used the term *aristocracy* as an indictment of a specific social class, see Gary J. Schmitt and Robert H. Webking, "Revolutionaries, Antifederalists, and Federalists: Comments on Gordon Wood's Understanding of the American Founding," *Political Science Reviewer*, 9 (Fall 1979), 195–229, esp. 216–18. Both meanings of *aristocracy* are to be found in the writings of Anti-Federalists. The task for historians is to determine whether different social groups used *aristocracy* in distinctive ways.

The most systematic discussion of the interrelated concepts of aristocracy and natural aristocracy by any Anti-Federalist can be found in the writings of the "Federal Farmer," who observed that:

There are three kinds of aristocracy spoken of in this country—the first is a constitutional one, which does not exist in the United States. . . . the second is an aristocratic faction; a junto of unprincipled men, often distinguished for their wealth and abilities, who combine together and make their object their private interests and aggrandizement.<sup>24</sup>

The third category in the "Federal Farmer's" scheme, natural aristocracy, was far more difficult to define. The "Federal Farmer" acknowledged that the exact composition of this class "is in some degree arbitrary; we may place men on one side of this line, which others may place on the other." The "Federal Farmer" estimated that the class numbered about "four or five thousand men," including high-ranking politicians like state governors; the most important officers of Congress; state senators; the officers of the army and militia; superior judges; and the most eminent professional men, wealthy merchants, and large property holders. In large measure this class was defined against the middling sort, which included the yeomanry, subordinate officers of the military and militia, mechanics, and many of the traders and merchants. The bottom category in the Anti-Federalist's scheme was the inferior sort, which included the dependent poor and unskilled laborers. Although few Anti-Federalists were as systematic in their thinking as the "Federal Farmer," many shared his belief that natural aristocracy was best understood as a distinctive, if ill-defined, social class, which the Constitution clearly favored.

The concept of natural aristocracy also figured prominently in Federalist thinking. The most detailed analysis occurred in John Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. Adams identified a class of natural aristocrats whose wealth, education, reputation, and talents set them apart from the common people. Adams defended the salutary effects that this class would have on government if its members were sequestered in an upper house of the legislature and allowed to play their natural role as a check on a popularly elected lower house.

When Adams and other Federalists discussed natural aristocracy they often blurred two distinct interpretations of who ought to be included as its members: society's social and political elite or men of wisdom, talent, and virtue. His use of the term included both an aristocracy of privilege and an aristocracy of merit. Virtually all Federalists supported the notion of natural aristocracy and were successful at deflecting Anti-Federalist criticisms of the concept in public debate. Federalists exploited the ambiguous meaning of the term by arguing that republicanism required a government composed of a natural aristocracy of virtuous leaders. When pressed in public debate, most Federalists followed the example of James Wilson who argued that a government ruled by a natural aristocracy was "nothing more or

<sup>24</sup> "Federal Farmer," in *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 267.

less than a government of the best men in the community . . . most noted for wisdom and virtue.”<sup>25</sup>

A reliance on the so-called natural aristocracy was compatible with the Federalist belief that the new Constitution’s system of representation should effectively filter out men with parochial views and elevate men of refined views who would best discern the common good. To promote the election of “men of intelligence and uprightness,” Federalists followed Wilson’s recommendation that “experience demonstrates that the larger the district of election, the better the representation. It is only in remote corners of a government, that little demagogues arise. Nothing but real weight of character can give a man real influence over a large district.” Wilson’s views were shared by James Madison (writing as “Publius”) who counseled the necessity of enlarging the “public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country.” In practice, Madison’s “chosen body of citizens,” the men who possessed “the weight of character” discussed by Wilson, were more likely to be found among the educated, affluent, and leisured elite.<sup>26</sup>

At the root of the Anti-Federalist critique of that elite, and of the ideology of natural aristocracy, lay a distinctive vernacular sociology. Anti-Federalist radicals, such as the Carlisle rioters, sought to ensure that representatives would do more than serve as spokesmen for the interests of individual localities. The radicals argued that true representation required that legislators actually resemble their constituents. When populists suggested that the legislature ought to be an exact mirror of society, they were speaking in a literal, not a figurative, sense. Since no one class possessed an exclusive monopoly on virtue, they reasoned, representative bodies ought to include a wide range of individuals from different social classes.

Anti-Federalists sought to demonstrate that when Federalists used the idea of natural aristocracy they were not discussing virtue but merely defending the interests of an identifiable social class. While Anti-Federalists thundered against natural aristocracy, Federalists countered with the claim that they were proponents of an aristocracy of merit, what we would now call meritocracy. Federalists argued that the Anti-Federalist alternative to an aristocracy of merit, the idea of the legislature

<sup>25</sup> John Adams, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (2 vols., London, 1787–1788). The first volume appeared shortly before the Constitutional Convention. See John R. Howe, Jr., *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (Princeton, 1966); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill, 1969), 567–92; Joyce Appleby, “The New Republican Synthesis and the Changing Political Ideas of John Adams,” *American Quarterly*, 25 (Dec. 1973), 578–95; and Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams* (Chapel Hill, 1976). James Wilson, speech in the Pennsylvania State Convention, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 488–89.

<sup>26</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 488–89. For similar statement by Wilson, see Adrienne Koch, ed., *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison* (Athens, Ohio, 1966), 74, 85. For Madison’s comment, see James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob Cooke (Middletown, 1961), 62. On the important but often subtle differences among Federalists on the issue of representation, see Lance Banning, “The Hamiltonian Madison: A Reconsideration,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 92 (Jan. 1984), 3–28. See also Robert J. Morgan, “Madison’s Theory of Representation in the Tenth Federalist,” *Journal of Politics*, 36 (Nov. 1974), 852–85; Jean Yarbrough, “Representation and Republicanism: Two Views,” *Publius*, 9 (Spring 1979), 77–98; and Gordon S. Wood, “Democracy and the Constitution,” in *How Democratic Is the Constitution?* ed. Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra (Washington, 1980), 1–17.

as an exact mirror of society's diverse interests and classes was incompatible with the republican ideal of virtue. Implicitly this debate turned on whether the necessary qualities of virtue, talent, and wisdom were evenly distributed throughout the various classes in society. Federalists believed that these qualities were disproportionately found in the upper stratum of society, while the populists among the Anti-Federalists maintained that there were enough virtuous men within the different classes to warrant broader representation. Federalists sought to frame the debate in terms of representativeness versus merit, while Anti-Federalist populists hoped to show that these two goals were not mutually exclusive.

The vernacular sociology of Anti-Federalists presented an inverted mirror image of the Enlightenment political sociology of Federalists like Madison and Wilson. Anti-Federalist populists and Federalists were in essential agreement about the impact of the Constitution's new scheme of representation: it would, both sides believed, enhance the prospects for electing members of the society's natural aristocracy and diminish the power of local politicians.<sup>27</sup>

In the Anti-Federalists' assault on natural aristocracy, John Adams became a favorite target. The connections between Adams's theory of government and Federalist ideas were made quite explicit by the "Centinel," who feared that "the principles of government inculcated in Mr Adams treatise" permeated the Constitution. The "Centinel" drew a sharp contrast between the aristocratic qualities of the federal Constitution and the more democratic elements of the 1776 Pennsylvania Constitution.<sup>28</sup>

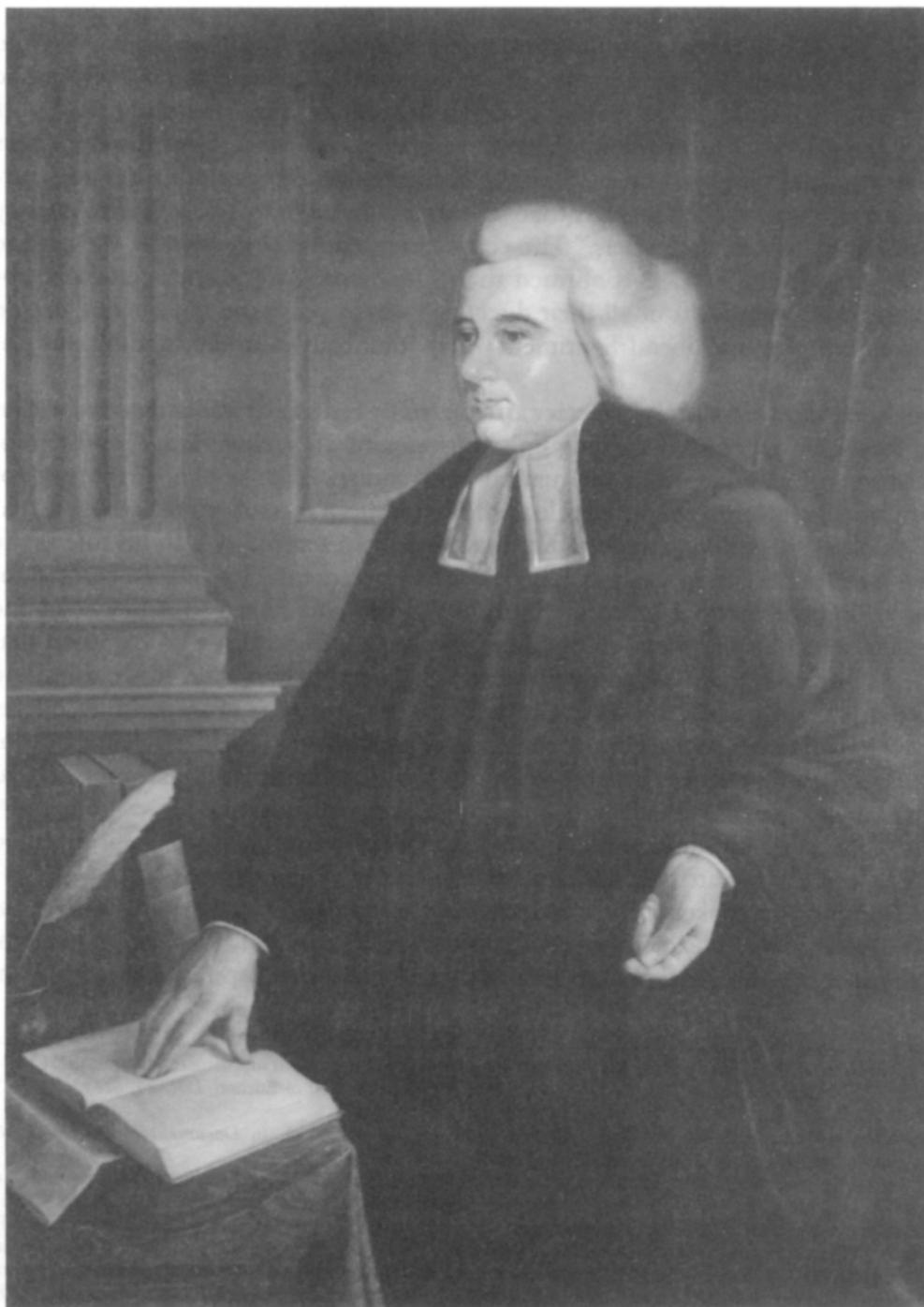
The Carlisle Anti-Federalists did not need the "Centinel" to remind them of the similarity between Adams's thinking and that of other Federalists. Carlisle Anti-Federalists did not have to look very far to find ardent supporters of Adams's theory of natural aristocracy. Charles Nisbet, president of nearby Dickinson College, took every opportunity to remind local inhabitants of the necessity of an educated governing elite drawn from the ranks of society's natural aristocracy.

A recent immigrant from Scotland and a staunch Presbyterian, Nisbet saw the world quite differently than did the Carlisle rioters. While they fulminated at lawyers, clergymen, and university men, Nisbet extolled the virtues of governance by a leisured and learned elite. Where the rioters saw an overbearing elite in control of political life, Nisbet saw a society that veered dangerously close to a Hobbesian state of nature. In Nisbet's view, "This new world . . . is unfortunately composed, like that of epicurus, of discordant atoms, jumbled together by chance and tossed by inconstancy in an immense vacuum, it greatly wants a principle of attraction and cohesion."<sup>29</sup> According to Nisbet's view, the New World threatened to level all distinctions and thus plunge society into anarchy.

<sup>27</sup> On the convergence of Federalist hopes and Anti-Federalist fears regarding representation under the new Constitution, see Jack Rakove, "The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George Washington," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Beeman et al., 261-94.

<sup>28</sup> On the connection between Adams and the new Constitution, see "Centinel," *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 138-39. For a different view, see *Carlisle Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1787.

<sup>29</sup> James Smylie, "Charles Nisbet: Second Thoughts on a Revolutionary Generation," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (April 1974), 189-205, esp. 193. See also "Charles Nisbet to the Students after Vaca-



**Charles Nisbet, the first president of Dickinson College and the most visible and vocal supporter of the idea of natural aristocracy in Carlisle. This portrait is based on a 1780 painting.**  
*Courtesy Dickinson College, Special Collections.*

To offset the leveling tendency of the frontier, Nisbet regularly intoned the sober principles of traditional republicanism to his students at Dickinson College. While the Constitutional Convention met, Nisbet reminded students in his class on public law that "it is certain that men of learning, leisure and easy circumstances . . . if they are endued with wisdom, virtue & humanity, are much fitter for every part of the business of government, than the ordinary class of people." It is hardly surprising that Anti-Federalists felt that "Dickinson College will be a Choice nursery for Federal officers and rulers." The commencement services held at the college during the spring of 1788 confirmed their suspicions. As one Anti-Federalist observed, "the great Drift of all their discourses was to prove the mass of the people to be void of every liberal Sentiment" and "destitute of understanding and integrity."<sup>30</sup>

The concept of natural aristocracy articulated by Federalists was embedded within an ideology that posited a strong link between education, knowledge, and republican virtue. In addition to the martial and yeoman ideals of the citizen, republicanism also accorded a special role to the "republican man of letters" whose extensive reading habits conferred on him a cosmopolitan sensibility.<sup>31</sup> In his role as the president of Dickinson College, Charles Nisbet became the leading spokesman for the concept of natural aristocracy within Carlisle and served as a model of the "republican man of letters." Nisbet was not the only Federalist who espoused that ideal. One of its most ardent exponents was Federalist Benjamin Rush, a leading supporter of the Constitution in Pennsylvania and a trustee of Dickinson College. Rush hoped to use education and the popular press to mold the character of citizens and believed that it was "possible to convert men into republican machines" so that they might "perform their parts properly in the great machine of government."<sup>32</sup> The choice of a mechanical metaphor was especially appropriate since it captured the essentially hierarchical nature of the Federalist vision of politics.

The most outspoken critic of the concept of natural aristocracy in Carlisle was William Petrikin, a leader of the Anti-Federalist election riot. Petrikin was the embodiment of a different, radical egalitarian, version of the "republic of letters." Un-

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tion," in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 182; Charles Nisbet to Alexander Addison, Dec. 7, 1787, *ibid.*, 259; Nisbet to the Earl of Buchan, Dec. 25, 1787, *ibid.*, XV, 87-90.

<sup>30</sup> Smylie, "Charles Nisbet," 193; Petrikin to Nicholson, May 8, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 675.

<sup>31</sup> On the centrality of the militia and yeomanry to traditional republicanism, see Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York, 1988), 153-208. On the ideological significance of education, print, the press, and the notion of the "republic of letters," see Richard D. Brown, "From Cohesion to Competition," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William Joyce et al. (Worcester, 1983), 300-309, esp. 304; and David Paul Nord, "A Republican Literature: Magazine Reading and Readers in Late-Eighteenth-Century New York," in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore, 1989), 114-39.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," in *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 9-23, esp. 17. In addition to Rush, several other prominent Federalists served as trustees of Dickinson College during this period, including John Dickinson and James Wilson, and among local Federalists, John Armstrong and John Montgomery. For a list of the college's trustees, see Charles C. Sellers, *Dickinson College: A History* (Middletown, 1973), 481-84.

like Nisbet, Petrikin was schooled in the popular press and proudly proclaimed that he was a “mechanic . . . who never spent an hour in coledge.”<sup>33</sup> He eagerly consumed the popular political literature of his day. The popular press did not, however, convert Petrikin into a “republican machine.” The egalitarian vision of the “republic of letters” that Anti-Federalists like Petrikin rallied around encouraged an active role for common folk who would exercise their own capacity for civic virtue by reading popular political literature, writing for the popular press, and even seeking public office. In fact, Petrikin was sufficiently inspired by what he read to take up his own pen to denounce the proponents of natural aristocracy in Carlisle. By examining Petrikin’s own Anti-Federalist ideas and his use of other Anti-Federalist writers we can gain important insights into the complex process by which common folk read the rhetoric of ratification and appropriated it to formulate their own populist ideology.<sup>34</sup>

Petrikin clearly favored the writings of the “Centinel,” one of the most egalitarian and democratic Anti-Federalist writers.<sup>35</sup> In one of the first pieces he published after the riot, he adopted the name the “Scourge,” defended the actions of the “friends of liberty,” and attacked the Federalists for “having the learned professions on their side.” He charged that Federalists in Carlisle had the support of “all the attorneys then in town and all the auxillaries they could procure” and compared their ideas to those of a “Solon, a Lycurgus . . . or an Adams.”<sup>36</sup>

Since formal education was clearly a prerogative associated with wealth and social standing, the “Scourge” saw the invocation of venerable republican figures such as

<sup>33</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, microform supplement, doc. no. 675. Little is known about Petrikin’s early life; see the biographical sketch in John Blair Linn, *History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1883), 219. Petrikin was an ideal person to represent local Anti-Federalist sentiment. Like many other Carlisle residents, he was not a large property holder but a man of modest means who rented a small house lot. Like many in this region, Petrikin was a recent immigrant from Scotland. On the prevalence of tenancy, see Lucy Simler, “Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania: The Case of Chester County,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (Oct. 1986), 542–69. On the growing class stratification in western Pennsylvania, see R. Eugene Harper, “The Class Structure of Western Pennsylvania in the Late Eighteenth Century, 1783–1796” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1969). On the importance of immigration, especially of the Scots and Scotch-Irish, see Thomas L. Purvis, “Patterns of Ethnic Settlement in Late-Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 70 (April 1987), 107–22; and Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986), 25–27, 176–85, 204–38. On the ethnocultural roots of Pennsylvania politics, see Owen Ireland, “The Crux of Politics: Religion and Party in Pennsylvania, 1778–1789,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 42 (Oct. 1985), 453–75. For suggestive attempts to link ethnocultural politics with variants of republicanism, see Robert Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York, 1979); and Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, 1985), 157.

<sup>34</sup> For theoretical works that have influenced my attempt to explore the different interpretive communities within Anti-Federalism, see Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); and, on the importance of moving beyond authorial intent to consider the response of readers, Roger Chartier, “Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories,” in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, ed. Dominick La Capra and Steven L. Kaplan (Ithaca, 1982), 13–46; and Janice Radway, “American Studies, Reader Theory, and the Literary Text: From the Study of Material Objects to the Study of Social Processes” in *American Studies in Transition*, ed. David E. Nye and Christen Kold Thomsen (Odense, Denmark, 1985), 29–51.

<sup>35</sup> On “Centinel,” see Saul Cornell, “Reflections on the ‘Late Remarkable Revolution in Government’: Aedanus Burke and Samuel Bryan’s Unpublished History of the Ratification of the Federal Constitution,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 112 (Jan. 1988), 103–30, esp. 113–16.

<sup>36</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 685–92.

Solon and Lycurgus as yet another attempt by the affluent to equate formal education with virtue. Unlike his Federalist opponents, Petrikin felt that politics required no recourse to classical allusion. Like the other participants in the Carlisle riot, he proudly asserted that virtue and knowledge were not the sole possessions of a small elite class of natural aristocrats. Anti-Federalists did not believe that figures from the republican past monopolized political wisdom any more than they believed that education or wealth signaled greater wisdom in their own society. When Anti-Federalists did invoke classical republican figures, they favored the defenders of the late Roman republic, such as Brutus, men who symbolized the battle against tyranny. In marked contrast, Federalists favored figures such as Publius, the great founders and lawgivers of republican antiquity.<sup>37</sup>

Although Anti-Federalists admired Brutus, the historical figure depicted in Plutarch's *Lives* mattered less to Anti-Federalist populists than the spirit of "Brutus" dwelling in all stalwart republicans.<sup>38</sup> When Carlisle Anti-Federalists praised the dissenting members of the state ratifying convention who voted against adoption of the Constitution, they took great pride in noting that "scholastic learning and erudition" were set against the "simple reason" of "a very few country farmers and mechanics." The dissenting Anti-Federalist members of the state convention, "it will be said . . . were the . . . Bruti, the Cato's of America." The modern heirs of Brutus did not need a class of educated leaders to interpret his message.<sup>39</sup> The literary conventions of the popular press, particularly the rules governing the use of pseudonyms, made popular participation possible. Any citizen concerned about the state of the republic could author a piece, assume the pen name "Brutus," and alert his fellow citizens that the republic or liberty was jeopardized. The tradition of pseudonymous writing closed the distance between readers and authors, allowing any concerned citizen to step forward and enter an ongoing debate as an equal participant. Thus one can readily understand Anti-Federalists' outrage when a number of Federalist printers sought to abandon the convention of printing anonymous or pseudonymous pieces. "Philadelphensis" thought that the Federalist effort to abolish the use of pseudonyms embodied "the genius and spirit of our new government" and that it would please the "well born." In opposition, he championed the belief that "it is of no importance whether or not a writer gives his name; it is with the illustrations and arguments he affords us, and not with his name," that "we have any concern." Requiring authors to sign their names would discourage "men of ability, of a modest, timid, or diffident cast of mind . . . from publishing their sentiments."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> On the differences between Anti-Federalist and Federalist pseudonyms, see McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 67–70.

<sup>38</sup> On the importance of Plutarch to eighteenth-century American perceptions of classical political history, see McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 67–70. Writing as "Aristocrotis," William Petrikin remarked that New York's Brutus was one of the more influential writers on plebeian Anti-Federalists. See Storing, ed., *Complete Anti-Federalist*, III, 198. On the influence of classical authors on Federalist and Anti-Federalist writing, see Donald S. Lutz, "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review*, 78 (March 1984), 189–97.

<sup>39</sup> Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, II, 661–63.

<sup>40</sup> On the ideological significance of Federalist attempts to stifle debate by requiring authors to publish their

Anti-Federalist hostility to men of learning did not signal a hostility to education or knowledge. Following the lead of the "Centinel," the Anti-Federalists argued that "liberty only flourishes where reason and knowledge are encouraged." For that reason they encouraged the growth of the popular press, which they viewed as a powerful weapon to combat patterns of deference.

By championing the popular press, Anti-Federalist populists signaled their desire to increase their contact with the wider world of print culture. As the "Centinel" noted, "in a confederated government of such extent as the United States, the freest communication of sentiment and information should be maintained." The progress of the ratification campaign was proof that without such a network, liberty itself was at risk. "For want of this intercommunity of sentiment and information," "Centinel" observed, "the liberties of this country are brought to an awful crisis." In his view, it was precisely the Federalists' ability to dominate the press that had allowed supporters of the Constitution to isolate and "overwhelm the enlightened opposition."<sup>41</sup>

Although several modern commentators have acknowledged that the opponents of the Constitution were wedded to an intensely localistic ideology, most scholars have mistakenly viewed Anti-Federalist localism as the polar opposite of Federalist cosmopolitanism.<sup>42</sup> Anti-Federalist localism was not an expression of a narrow parochial and insular world view. Localist ideology owed much to whig oppositional thought, especially the rhetoric of country ideology. The pervasive fears of centralized authority, standing armies, and excessive taxation were only the most obvious instances of Anti-Federalism's debt to this older whig tradition. It would, however, be a mistake to view Anti-Federalist ideology as a mere echo of an older English struggle between "court and country."<sup>43</sup> The emergence of a distinctively American localist ideology was conditioned by the structure of imperial relations between the American colonies and Britain. The essence of Anti-Federalist localist ideology was captured by the ardent states' rights advocate Luther Martin, who argued that the American people were accustomed to "have their seats of government near them,

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names, see Robert Gross, "The Authority of the Word: Print and Social Change in America, 1607-1880," 1984, (in Saul Cornell's possession), 125-35; and "Philadelphensis," *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, III, 103-4.

<sup>41</sup> "Centinel," *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 159, 205. For a radical version of the "republic of letters" similar to the one espoused by Petrikin, see Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., "William Manning's *The Key to Liberty*," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 13 (April 1956), 202-54.

<sup>42</sup> On the localist/cosmopolitan dichotomy, see Jackson Turner Main, *Political Parties before the Constitution* (Chapel Hill, 1973), 32.

<sup>43</sup> On republicanism, whig politics, and "country ideology," see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975); J. G. A. Pocock, ed., *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton, 1980); J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, Eng., 1985); and Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*. Useful review articles that treat the problem of republicanism in early American history include Robert Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 29 (Jan. 1972), 49-80; Robert Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *ibid.*, 39 (April 1982), 334-56; and the special issue "Republicanism in the History and Historiography of the United States," ed. Joyce Appleby, *American Quarterly*, 37 (Fall 1985), 461-598. For contrasting views of the relevance of that literature to Anti-Federalist thought, see Hutson, "Country, Court, and Constitution," and Richard Beeman "Introduction," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Beeman et al., 3-19, esp. 16.

to which they might have access, without much inconvenience." Martin's vision of localism was congruent with that of Massachusetts Anti-Federalist James Winthrop, who saw localism as the natural consequence of the diversity of American society. It is hard to maintain that Anti-Federalist localists were narrow-minded provincial politicians while recognizing Winthrop, the librarian of Harvard College, and Martin, a respected figure in the Maryland legal community, as leading theorists of Anti-Federalist localism.<sup>44</sup> Both men illustrate the existence of an important strain of cosmopolitan localism among the Anti-Federalist elite.

A simple localist/cosmopolitan dichotomy not only fails to capture the complexity of many leading Anti-Federalists, but it also obscures the nature of the popular Anti-Federalist ideology espoused by such individuals as William Petrikin and the Carlisle rioters. The localism of the Carlisle rioters was closely tied to their egalitarian populist ideas. Although distinctly localistic in outlook, Anti-Federalists were not provincial in their cultural views; they did not envision localities as isolated and insular communities. Their localism stressed the importance of face-to-face relationships and the values of neighborliness even as they defended the necessity of expanding communication between individual communities. In this way, local autonomy could be maintained without fostering provincialism. Even the localism of the most populist-minded Anti-Federalists was closely tied to their own egalitarian defense of the "republic of letters."

The most forceful expression of Petrikin's egalitarian populism came in a pamphlet he authored under the pseudonym "Aristocrotis." Even the choice of pseudonym was intended to parody Federalist ideas of natural aristocracy. Petrikin's sardonic tone mocked Federalist elitism and in the process he provided a forceful statement of his own populist ideals. "Aristocrotis" addressed his pamphlet to the "well born," and "the full blooded gentry," who have the "necessary qualifications of authority; such as the dictatorial air, the magisterial voice, the imperious tone, the haughty countenance." At several points, "Aristocrotis" seemed to echo the words of Charles Nisbet, who would have undoubtedly agreed that "nature hath placed proper degrees and subordinations amongst mankind, and ordained a few to rule, and many to obey." For Petrikin, the Constitution was designed to elevate the members of an identifiable class of natural aristocrats to preeminence.<sup>45</sup>

"Aristocrotis" took the logic of the Federalist defense of disinterestedness to its final conclusion by claiming that "a government . . . agreeable to nature must be entirely independent." According to the satire of "Aristocrotis," the Revolution had given the people "exorbitant power . . . of electing their rulers" tending to "the subversion of all order and good government." The greatest evil flowing from the excess of democracy was the necessity of pandering to the mob, which "Aristocrotis" described as the vulgar practice of "electioneering." The Constitutional Convention had, according to his view, successfully rolled back these democratic excesses,

<sup>44</sup> On the relationship between localism and the structure of politics within the British Empire, see Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Centers: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens, Ga., 1986); [Luther Martin], "The Genuine Information," *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 48; [James Winthrop], "Agrippa," *ibid.*, IV, 76-77, 93.

<sup>45</sup> [Petrikin], *Government of Nature*, in *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, III, 197-98, 204-5.

restoring the legislative branch to its proper position of independence from the will of the people. To facilitate this goal the convention had wisely decided against annual elections, allowed Congress to determine the manner and place of holding elections, and provided for taxes that would insure that the people would be forced to “attend to their own business; and not be dabbling in politics.”<sup>46</sup>

Petrikin’s satire echoed the Federalist sentiments voiced at the Dickinson College commencement, where Nisbet, and his students attacked the people as “dupes of selfish demagogue[s].” Nisbet like many other Carlisle Federalists, would have agreed with “Mentor,” who observed that after the Revolution, representatives had allowed “local situations bias them to act contrary to the general good.” “Mentor” recommended electing men of property and education who were not “confined, by their domestic concerns.” Once again, the notion of a leisured, gentlemanly elite was set against a localistic and decidedly populist conception of representation.<sup>47</sup>

The Federalist hostility to “electioneering” that Petrikin parodied as “Aristocrotis,” like the charges made by “Mentor” blended together two distinct concerns. Federalists feared that postrevolutionary politics had become too interest-oriented and that representatives had become too parochial. Federalists also feared that the Revolution had eroded the traditional deference accorded gentlemen.

Anti-Federalist populist localism was based on a “mandate” or “actual” theory of representation. According to it, representatives were to act as agents of their constituents. In the view of most Anti-Federalists, members of the legislature had to be sufficiently steeped in the values of the locality, immersed in its economic and social life, to serve as true spokesmen for community interests. To achieve that goal, populists argued, representatives had to resemble those they represented. The ideology of localism rejected the republican ideal of disinterestedness. Only by guarding the many diverse local interests in society, Anti-Federalists believed, could Americans maintain liberty.<sup>48</sup>

Challenges to the claim that disinterested gentlemen of refined views were more capable of representing the people than were the people themselves resonated in the minds of backcountry folk. Such ideas were not unique to the backcountry of Pennsylvania. Indeed, similar ideas could be found throughout the backcountry from Maine to Georgia. Amos Singletary, an Anti-Federalist from Sutton, Massachusetts, in the heart of Shaysite Worcester County, warned that “these lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly,” would “get into Congress themselves” and would become “the managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folks.”<sup>49</sup>

The rhetoric of populists in Carlisle was tinged with similar inchoate class consciousness. At the root of their crudely formulated class critique was the claim that

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 199, 202.

<sup>47</sup> Petrikin to Nicholson, May 8, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 675; “Mentor,” *Carlisle Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1786.

<sup>48</sup> See Hanna F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, 1967), 60–61, 146–47.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Elliot, ed., *The Debates in the Several State Conventions . . .* (5 vols., Philadelphia, 1836–1845), II, 102.

an identifiable class of natural aristocrats that included lawyers, men of learning and monied men were engaged in a systematic plot to increase their own power and dilute the influence of the people in government. John Montgomery, a Carlisle Federalist, observed that Anti-Federalists feared that the Constitution would make the farmers “dependents . . . who will be reduced to a sort of vassalage.”<sup>50</sup>

The plebeian populism that motivated so much of the popular opposition to the Constitution created an important division within the ranks of the Anti-Federalists. It divided those (such as Petrikin) hostile to the concept of natural aristocracy from those whose fear that the Constitution promoted aristocracy did not lead them to challenge the ideal of natural aristocracy.

Anti-Federalists like Virginia’s George Mason feared that the government created by the Constitution would “commence in a moderate Aristocracy” and would probably degenerate into an “oppressive Aristocracy.” Mason is quite properly thought of as a “man of little faith.” He did not, however, fear natural aristocracy. A wealthy cosmopolitan planter like Mason expected society’s leaders to be drawn from the gentlemanly elite. What worried Mason was the traditional republican fear of corruption. In his mind, any group of men who were given too much power would seek aggrandizement and elevate their own interests above those of society. The solution to Mason’s objections was a more effective system of checks on government and a written bill of rights to protect individual liberty. Hardly a populist democrat, Mason was a critic of the democratic excess that characterized American politics during the Confederation period. At the Constitutional Convention, Mason acknowledged “that we had been too democratic,” but he also cautioned against moving too far “into the opposite extreme.”<sup>51</sup> Mason’s elitist republicanism stood in stark contrast to the populist sentiments of the Carlisle rioters. The debate over natural aristocracy was only one instance of a basic rift separating elite Anti-Federalists from grass-roots Anti-Federalists.

### Liberty versus Order: Responses to Backcountry Violence

If the issue of natural aristocracy divided Anti-Federalists, the plebeian traditions of protest enacted by the Carlisle rioters were even more divisive. Events like the Carlisle riot touched a sensitive nerve in leading figures on both sides of the ratification struggle. It is hardly surprising that Federalists viewed such events as signs of the need for a stronger union. What is surprising is the reaction of leading Anti-Federalists to those events. Anti-Federalist reactions were often indistinguishable from those of Federalists. The fear of aristocracy and concern for liberty that inspired elite opposition to the Constitution paled when the Anti-Federalists were presented with the specter of anarchy. For Anti-Federalists of the better sort, the actions of the rioters were a sobering reminder of the necessity and difficulty of balancing liberty and order.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Montgomery to Wilson, March 2, 1788, in *Documentary History of Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 705.

<sup>51</sup> “George Mason’s Objections to the Constitution of Government Formed by the Convention, 1787,” in *Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Storing, II, 13; Koch, ed., *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison*, 39.

<sup>52</sup> Gordon S. Wood’s discussion of a struggle between the “worthy and licentious” captures the essential political

Shays's Rebellion left a profound imprint on the minds of many Americans, and the fear of anarchy and disorder created by the western Massachusetts insurgents influenced members of political elites on both sides of the ratification struggle. The climate of fear created by Shays's Rebellion accounts for the coverage of the Carlisle riot in the press as far south as Georgia and as far north as Maine. Many Federalists viewed the rioters as "mobites" and "levellers."<sup>53</sup>

The horror of Federalists was more than matched by the reactions of leading Anti-Federalists, especially in Massachusetts, where Shays's Rebellion had left an especially deep impression. To an experienced politician like Elbridge Gerry, a man of the "better sort," the Carlisle riot was a bitter reminder of the leveling tendencies among the populace. Although an outspoken opponent of the Constitution, Gerry shared the Federalist belief that the nation's political problems stemmed from an "excess of democracy." His commitment to republican ideas stopped well short of the democratic leanings of the Carlisle rioters. In the Constitutional Convention he admitted that he "had been taught by experience the danger of the levelling spirit." When he learned that the "people threatend the Justice in Carlisle to pull down his House, & the houses of the federalists," Gerry expressed grave concern that "we shall be in a civil War," but he hoped that God would "avert the evil." Rather than solidifying opposition to the Constitution, the Carlisle riot drove a wedge between the majority of backcountry Anti-Federalists and the most respected Anti-Federalist leaders.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the fears of prominent Anti-Federalists, popular support for the rioters was strong in the Pennsylvania backcountry. William Petrikin observed that in the aftermath of the riot "almost every day . . . some new society . . . [is] being formed" to oppose "this detastable Fedrall conspiracy." Anti-Federalist Richard Baird noted that "on the West side of the Susquehanna in this state there is at least nine out of every ten that would at the risk of their lives & property" oppose the new Constitution.<sup>55</sup>

In the wake of the peaceful resolution of events in Carlisle, backcountry Anti-Federalists mounted a petition campaign to void the actions of the state ratifying convention. In the short space of twelve days, Anti-Federalists gathered more than six thousand signatures to petitions in six counties. Leading Federalists in Huntingdon County sought to frustrate the campaign by destroying Anti-Federalist pe-

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dynamic of the battle between Anti-Federalist populists and Federalists. However, Wood treated "aristocratic" Anti-Federalists as unrepresentative, whereas I see them as representative of an elite strand of Antifederalism. See Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 471–518. For evidence that many prominent Anti-Federalists worried about the dangers of Shaysism, see Robert A. Feer, "Shays's Rebellion and the Constitution: A Study in Causation," *New England Quarterly*, 42 (Sept. 1969), 388–410. One suggestive attempt to place the tension between liberty and order at the center of the history of this period is Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York, 1986).

<sup>53</sup> The Federalist description of the riot by an "Old Man" was reprinted thirty-seven times by March 10, 1788, in papers from Georgia to Maine. On the distribution of the piece, see Jensen et al., eds., *Documentary History of the Ratification*, XV, 225; *ibid.*, microform supplement, doc. nos. 392, 334.

<sup>54</sup> For Gerry's statements about the dangers of too much democracy, see Koch, ed., *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention*, 39. On Gerry's view of events in Carlisle, see Elbridge Gerry to S. R. Gerry, Jan. 28, 1788, Samuel R. Gerry Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.).

<sup>55</sup> Petrikin to Nicholson, Feb. 24, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 695–96; Richard Baird to Nicholson, Feb. 1, 1788, *ibid.*, 712.

titions. The actions of the “federal junto” aroused the indignation of local inhabitants who turned to the traditions of rough music to vent their anger. “A number of people . . . collected, and conducted upon the backs of old *scabby* ponies the EFFIGIES of the principals of the junto.” When this procession passed the local courthouse, officers of the court apprehended the “effigy-men.” The response of the local community was decisive. “Immediately the county took the alarm, assembled, and liberated the sons of liberty, so unjustly confined.” The release of the prisoners was greeted with “loud huzzas and repeated acclamations of joy from a large concourse of people.” These self-styled sons of liberty re-enacted the same traditions of direct community action that inspired Anti-Federalists in Carlisle. Once again Anti-Federalists took to the streets, marched to the jail, and forced the release of their fellow citizens who had been unjustly imprisoned by an “aristocratic junto.”<sup>56</sup>

Backcountry Anti-Federalists did not limit their actions to petition campaigns and street demonstrations. Events like the Carlisle and Huntingdon riots gave additional impetus to the move to call a second convention to revise the federal Constitution. Encouraged by the plans for a convention in Harrisburg, Carlisle Anti-Federalists offered up the following toast in celebration: “may such amendments be speedily framed . . . as may render the proposed Constitution of the United States truly democratical.”<sup>57</sup> Leading Anti-Federalists from throughout Pennsylvania and several newcomers to Pennsylvania politics did convene in Harrisburg to discuss the future of their opposition to the new Constitution. One of the newcomers was a feisty representative from Carlisle, William Petrikin.<sup>58</sup>

Petrikin wanted the convention to adopt a radical program to unite Anti-Federalists throughout the country and to call a new convention to amend the Constitution. Petrikin’s more radical position was defeated by the moderate forces led by a Philadelphia merchant, Charles Pettit. Like most other Anti-Federalist leaders, Pettit sought to distance himself from events such as the Carlisle riot. Men like Pettit were alarmed by the depth of hostility in the backcountry and feared the prospects of anarchy. Pettit felt that to “reject the New Plan and attempt again to resort to the old would . . . throw us into a State of Nature, filled with internal Discord.” Pettit captured the view of many leading Anti-Federalists when he later confided to George Washington that “even after the vote of adoption by the State Convention, a large proportion of the people, especially in the western counties, shewed a disposition to resist the operation of it, in a manner which I thought indicated danger to the peace of the State.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> On the petition campaign, see *ibid.*, 709–25. On the riot in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, see *ibid.*, 718.

<sup>57</sup> Merrill Jensen and Robert A. Becker, eds., *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788–1790* (3 vols., Madison, 1976– ), I, 242.

<sup>58</sup> Documents relating to the Harrisburg Convention have been reproduced *ibid.*, I, 257–81. For historical discussion of the Harrisburg convention, see Paul Leicester Ford, *The Origin, Purpose, and Result of the Harrisburg Convention of 1788: A Study in Popular Government* (Brooklyn, 1890); Linda Grant DePauw, “The Anticlimax of Antifederalism: The Abortive Second Convention Movement, 1788–89,” *Prologue*, 2 (Fall 1970), 98–114; and Steven R. Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition: Antifederalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Millwood, 1979), 142–44.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Pettit to Robert Whitehill, June 5, 1788, Robert Whitehill Papers (Hamilton Library, Cumberland County Historical Society). See also Pettit to George Washington, March 19, 1791, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, microform supplement, doc. no. 706.

Ironically, the very success of the Carlisle rioters ultimately proved their own undoing. The fear of anarchy aided the moderates at Harrisburg and effectively ensured the demise of the second convention movement. Rather than encourage extralegal action on the part of backcountry populists, leading Anti-Federalists opted to compromise and take up their role as a “loyal opposition party.”<sup>60</sup>

Elbridge Gerry, George Mason, and Charles Pettit were representative of Anti-Federalists of the “better sort.” They interpreted events like the Carlisle riot as a reminder of the precarious balance between liberty and order. The Anti-Federalism of these men had little to do with any populist notions of democracy. Such “men of little faith” sought to steer a political course between unfettered democracy and tyranny. The fear of popular anarchy was as intense among the Anti-Federalist political elite as among the Federalist leadership.<sup>61</sup>

The irony surrounding events in Carlisle was not lost on local Federalist leaders. John Montgomery, a leading Carlisle Federalist, astutely noted that the unintended consequence of public disturbances like the Carlisle riot was to strengthen the position of Federalists and moderate Anti-Federalists at the expense of more radical elements among the opponents of the Constitution. After expressing his relief that “horrors of civil war” had been averted, Montgomery, observed that events in Carlisle, like so much “seeming evil . . . since the Revolution” had “been productive of real good in our public affairs.”<sup>62</sup>

### The Legacy of Plebeian Populism

If we are to understand why popular antagonism to the Constitution spilled into the streets we must attempt to see the struggle through the eyes of the men who risked their lives to oppose a form of government that, they thought, veered toward a new aristocratic order.

The rioters in Carlisle, like the supporters of Shays and many Anti-Federalists throughout the backcountry, were extremely hostile toward the federal Constitution. Although the eruption of violence in Carlisle grew out of local circumstances and events, the ideology that inspired this violent outburst and the rhetoric evoked to articulate local grievances were hardly unique to Carlisle. The rhetoric and symbols of protest appropriated by the rioters filled the popular press. Similar indictments of the new Constitution could be found in every major Anti-Federalist newspaper. Backcountry Anti-Federalists of the “lower and middling sort” articulated a vision of populist democracy that was decidedly egalitarian and localistic. They challenged the idea that wealth, education, or prestige were appropriate measures of civic virtue and resisted the attempt by Federalists to frame a political system that shifted political power away from local communities. This position set backcountry opponents of the Constitution against Federalists who championed a

<sup>60</sup> For a slightly different explanation of Anti-Federalism’s transition into a loyal opposition, see Lance Banning, “Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (April 1974), 167–88.

<sup>61</sup> Kenyon, “Men of Little Faith.”

<sup>62</sup> Montgomery to Wilson, March 2, 1788, in *Documentary History of the Ratification*, ed. Jensen et al., II, 703, 704.

vision of representative government that sought to encourage deference for men of "refined views" who would transcend local interests.

The ideological divide separating Federalists from Anti-Federalists cannot, however, be understood solely in terms of a battle between populist democrats and supporters of deference and order. Not everyone within the Anti-Federalist ranks championed populist democratic sentiments. Many leading Anti-Federalists were as concerned about the dangers of democratic excess as were leading Federalists. Many Anti-Federalists of the better sort were "men of little faith," who saw the federal Constitution as a threat to individual liberty and a dangerous departure from traditional whig opposition to powerful centralized governments. Anti-Federalists of the better sort, like the young John Quincy Adams, took great pains to make clear that their "strong *antifederalist*" sentiments were based upon "very different principles than those of your Worcester insurgents [Shaysites]." Indeed, it was precisely because of the popularity of Anti-Federalist sympathy among former Shaysites, that men like John Quincy Adams felt that continuing opposition to the Constitution "would be productive of much greater evils," no matter how "dangerous the tendency" of the new frame of government.<sup>63</sup>

As for Anti-Federalist populists, although they did not succeed in their efforts to block ratification, their political vision should not be ignored. The populist sentiments that inspired backcountry Anti-Federalists would continue to be a potent force in American political culture. A scant few years would pass before the anger and frustrations of common folk would again lead men into the streets to vent their hostility against the new federal government. The reverberations of Anti-Federalism can clearly be heard in the Whiskey Rebellion. In fact, the Anti-Federalist challenge to the Constitution, like the Whiskey Rebellion, was only the first of many populist challenges that shaped the course of American politics. Localism and egalitarianism, the cornerstones of Anti-Federalist populism, provided inspiration for a distinctly American style of radical politics, one fashioned around the idea of participatory democracy and equality. Similar ideas would echo in the rhetoric of Jacksonian democracy and the Populist movement of the late nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> John Quincy Adams to Oliver Fiske, Feb. 17, 1788, Adams folder, Miscellaneous Manuscripts (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.).

<sup>64</sup> On unrest in Carlisle during the Whiskey Insurrection, see Slaughter, *Whiskey Rebellion*, 205–11. On the ideological continuity between Anti-Federalism and the Whiskey Rebels, see Dorothy Fennell, "Herman Husband's Antifederalism and the Rebellion in Western Pennsylvania," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Philadelphia, April 1987 (in Cornell's possession). On the Anti-Federalists' vision of participatory democracy, see Jennifer Nedelsky, "Confining Democratic Politics: Anti-Federalists, Federalists, and the Constitution," *Harvard Law Review*, 96 (Dec. 1982), 340–60. Many of the ideas essential to Anti-Federalist populism played an important role in Jacksonian thought. See Richard Ellis, "The Persistence of Anti-Federalism after 1789," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Beeman et al., 295–314. On the radical democratic character of much Jacksonian rhetoric, see John Ashworth, *'Agrarians' & 'Aristocrats': Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837–1846* (Cambridge, Eng., 1983). On the Populist movement, see Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York, 1978). On the rediscovery of Anti-Federalism by modern populists, see Saul Cornell, "The Changing Historical Fortunes of the Anti-Federalists," *Northwestern University Law Review* (forthcoming).