

★ THE FEDERALIST #14 ★

In the Federalist Papers, James Madison presented arguments in favor of ratification of the new Constitution. In the excerpt below, *Federalist #14*, Madison pointed out the need for a strong central government. At the same time, he argued that the states would not lose their importance in a federal system.

“We have seen the necessity of the Union as our [strength] against foreign danger, as the conservator of peace among ourselves, as the guardian of our commerce and other common interests, as the only substitute for those military establishments which have subverted the liberties of the old world. . . .

In a democracy, the people meet and exercise the government in person; in a republic they assemble and administer it by their representatives and agents. A democracy consequently must be confined to a small spot. A republic may be extended over a large region.

The natural limit of a democracy is that distance from the central point, which will just permit the most remote citizens to assemble as often as their public functions demand, and will include no greater number than can join in those functions. The natural limit of a republic is that distance from the center which will barely allow the representatives of the people to meet as often as may be necessary for the administration of public affairs. . . . It is to be remembered that the general government is not to be charged with the whole power of making and administering the laws. Its jurisdiction is limited to certain [specific issues], which concern all the members of the republic. . . . The subordinate [states], which can extend their care to all those other objects which can be separately provided for, will retain their due authority and activity.

A second observation to be made is that the immediate object of the federal Constitution is to secure the union of the thirteen primitive States. . . . and to add to them such other states, as may arise in their neighborhoods. . . .

. . . In the third place, [the Constitution will see] that [movement] throughout the Union will be facilitated by new improvements [such as] roads . . . accommodations for travelers . . . interior navigation. . . .

A fourth and still more important consideration is . . . in regard to the safety [of the individual States. Each State should] find an inducement to make some sacrifices for the sake of the general protection. The States which lie at the greatest distance from the heart of the union, and which of course may partake least of its benefits, will be at the same time near foreign nations. These States will consequently stand on particular occasions in greatest need of the entire nation's strength and resources. It may be inconvenient for [some States] to send their representatives to the seat of government, but they would find it more so to struggle along against an invading enemy, or even to support alone the whole expense of taking precautions which may be dictated by continual danger.

. . . Happily for America, . . . [the revolutionary leaders] pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. . . . If they erred most in the structure of the Union, this was the work most difficult to be executed; this is the work which has been new modeled by the act of your convention, and it is that act on which you are now to deliberate and decide.”