

The Federalist No. 10 Summary

This essay, the first of Madison's contributions to the series, was a rather long development of the theme that a well-constructed union would break and control the violence of faction, a "dangerous vice" in popular governments.

As defined by Madison, a faction was a number of citizens, whether a majority or minority, who were united and activated "by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."

There were two ways of removing the causes of factions, or political parties. The first was to destroy the liberty essential to their existence. This remedy would be worse than the disease. The second was to give everyone the same opinions, passions, and interests. This was impossible. Woven into the fabric of all societies, deeply planted in the very nature of man, were conflicting ideas, interests, and passions. The greatest source of factions had always been the various and unequal distribution of property, said Madison:

Those who hold, and those who are without property, have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors, and those who are debtors, . . . a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a monied interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern Legislation.

The inference to which we are brought, is, that the causes of faction cannot be removed; and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*. Such effects could be better controlled in a large society under a representative form of government than in a small society under a popular form of government. The proposed constitution would check the power of factions by balancing one against the other. Factious leaders might "kindle a flame" in one state, but would be unable to spread a general conflagration throughout the states.

"A rage for paper money, for abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project, . . ." was not likely to spread if those professing themselves republicans showed zeal in "supporting the character of Federalists."

Analysis

Madison's definition of a "faction," or political party, is interesting and most significant in view of the fact that Madison soon ceased to be one of the Federalists who believed in a one-party system, and became Jefferson's most active lieutenant in organizing in opposition the Democratic-Republican Party, which was strongly Anti-Federalist and took power after 1800.