

*Extract from Governor Strong's speech, 17th January, 1806.*

Changes in the constitution of government are more injurious than in the system of laws: even a small innovation may destroy its principles. The framers of the constitution had before them not only the forms which had been preferred by the several states; but those also, which, before that time, had been devised in other ages and nations. And though the repeated experiments which have since taken place in Europe, may suggest matter for warning, they afford nothing for imitation. If, notwithstanding, it is found by experience, that the constitution operates very unequally, or the construction of any part is doubtful, amendments may be necessary to alter or explain it. But it is in vain to expect that all will be satisfied—Free governments admit of an endless variety of modifications; and the opinions entertained of their respective merits are equally various. When the constitution was established, perhaps no man that became subject to it was perfectly pleased with every part. It was the result of mutual concession: and such, indeed, must always be the case, when a form of government is voluntarily accepted by a community.

In the minds of some men, there seems to be a restlessness, which renders them dissatisfied with any uniform course of things, and makes them eager in the pursuit of novelty. They abound in projects, and are ever meditating some fanciful change in the plan of government, which their imaginations represent as useful. But men of great ambition are still more dangerous; they commonly make the fairest pretences to principles, though they are actuated only by self interest.—If the constitution or laws of their country present obstacles to the accomplishment of their wishes, they employ every artifice to alter or abolish them; and if individuals oppose their attempts, they are equally artful and solicitous to destroy their influence and render them odious to their fellow citizens.

Few men, even in a prosperous community, are fully satisfied with their condition. A great part are easily induced to believe, that there is something wrong in the government or laws, which might be rectified to their advantage. They therefore readily embrace any specious proposal to effect an alteration. The crafty and ambitious know how to avail themselves of this disposition to change, and encourage their followers to expect that the amendments they propose will perfectly suit their case, and produce the very blessings they wish: in this way they not only effect their immediate object, but acquire an influence which enables them afterwards to accomplish the most disastrous innovations. Such persons encourage hopes that can never be realized, and excite complaints which the most wise and benevolent administration is unable to remove.

Our forms of government are doubtless like all other human institutions, imperfect; but they will insure the blessings of freedom to the citizens, and preserve their tranquility, as long as they are virtuous; and no constitution that has been or can be formed will secure those blessings to a depraved and vicious people."

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