

First Name

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English 2327

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Text: *Federalist No.10* [James Madison]

Passage: “A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to human passions have in turn divided mankind into parties; inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to cooperate for their common good” (Madison 742).

Question: How does James Madison define factions in order to illustrate the outcome they will have on Government?

Issue: Issue of cause and effect. The purpose of the Federalist papers was to gain support for the proposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution. The question deals with how factions effected the ratifying of the United States Constitution. Madison defines a “faction as a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated 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” (742). As long as men hold different opinions, different amounts of wealth, own different amounts of property, men will associate with people within their social group. Madison contends a Republican form of government is the best solution for controlling factions and in doing so, liberty is not eliminated. The notable advantage it created was a “happy combination” of a national government too large to be

controlled by a single faction, and states would have smaller governments that would be more responsive to local needs (Madison 746). Madison states, “The inference to which we are brought is the *causes* of faction cannot be removed, and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*” (Madison 744). The causes of factions are in this manner part of nature of man and we must deal with their effects and accept their existence. The government created by the U.S. Constitution will control the damage caused by the factions.

Critical Approach: Reader-Response Criticism. During the ratification process of the United States Constitution two distinct parties emerged. The Federalists supported the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and declared the need for a stronger national government; while the Anti-Federalists opposed the ratification of the U.S. Constitution because they favored a strong state government and a weaker national government. James Madison used the Federalist Papers to show his support for the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Both supporters and opponents of the plan were concerned with the political instability produced by rival factions. He demonstrated that by "extending the sphere" of republican government to a national scope, the nation could avoid many of the problems of such a form of government at the local level. The greater diversity of large republics minimized the evils of faction and popular passion, making it more difficult for tyrannical majorities to combine. Madison emphasizes that there are two ways to control a faction; “the one by destroying liberty which is essential to existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests” (Madison 742). Madison described such provisions in the Constitution as a "republican remedy" for the "diseases most incident to republican government" (Madison 747).

Answer: Madison defined a faction as a group of people who gather together to protect and promote their special economic and political opinions. They become at odds with each other, work against public interests, and infringe upon the rights of others. Madison feared that factions would suppress civil liberties like Parliament imposed upon the colonies.