

## Bailyn Question 25 points

Charles Beard, in The Supreme Court and the Constitution (1912) and in An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (1913), argued that the framers of the Constitution were less interested in furthering democratic principles than in protecting private property and the interests of the wealthy class. He said:

The makers of the Constitution represented the solid, conservative, commercial and financial interests of the country --not the interests which denounced and proscribed judges in Rhode Island, New Jersey, and North Carolina, and stoned their houses in New York. The conservative interests, made desperate by the imbecilities of the Confederation and harried by state legislatures, roused themselves from the lethargy, drew together in a mighty effort to establish a government that would be strong enough to pay the national debt, regulate interstate and foreign commerce, provide for national defense, prevent fluctuations in the currency created by paper emissions, and control the propensities of legislative majorities to attack private rights...The radicals, however, like Patrick Henry, Jefferson, and Samuel Adams, were conspicuous by their absence from the Convention. . . . every page of the laconic record of the proceedings of the convention, preserved to posterity by Mr. Madison, shows conclusively that the members of that assembly were not seeking to realize any fine notions about democracy and equality, but were striving with all the resources of political wisdom at their command to set up a system of government that would be stable and efficient, safeguarded on the one hand against the possibilities of despotism and on the other against the onslaught of majorities. In the mind of Mr. Gerry, the evils they had experienced flowed "from the excess of democracy" . . . Mr. Randolph, in offering to the consideration of the convention his plan of government, observed "that the general object was to provide a cure for the evils under which the United States labored; that, in tracing these evils to their origin, every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy; that some check therefore was to be sought for against this tendency of our governments; and that a good Senate seemed most likely to answer the purpose." Mr. Hamilton, in advocating a life term for Senators, urged that "all communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born and the other the mass of the people who seldom judge or determine right."

Using the information from the Bailyn reading, write a reaction paper (2-3 pages) to Mr. Beard's position. **You should use specifics from the reading in your assessment.**