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South Carolina and the national government were facing similar economic problems of indebtedness and depression as a result of the Revolutionary War. Tensions were strong between the coastal elite and backcountry farmers and woodsmen up and down the East Coast.

Shay's Rebellion, which occurred in Massachusetts, resulted in the powerful people calling for a stronger central government that could control future rebellions. Most of the rebellious leaders in the Shay Rebellion had fought in the Revolutionary War and were in danger of losing their farms due to taxes owed but not paid while the men were serving their country in the military.

The Philadelphia Convention was called to help solve the government's problems under the Articles of Confederation. South Carolinians had played a major role in the writing of the Constitution of 1787, due to their state already having a Constitution.

At the Constitutional Convention, South Carolinian representatives supported a stronger national government in a new U.S. Constitution because the weaknesses of running the country under the Articles of Confederation were becoming more and more evident. The delegates from SC took strong positions during all the debates.

South Carolinians believed it would be better to write a new Constitution rather than simply try to amend the Articles. They supported the Virginia Plan which called for a three-branch government: Legislative, Judiciary and Executive. The three-branch government would be equal in authority/power.

There were two plans for selecting representatives from each state, if a new Constitution were created. One was known as the New Jersey Plan (in which smaller states would have equal representation, whereas the Virginia Plan called for representation to be based on the state's population. The Virginia Plan would give more populous states, such as South Carolina, more power in the new national government.

South Carolina supported the Great Compromise which was also known as the "Connecticut Compromise." This approach called for equal representation of states in the Senate and proportional representation of the states in the House of Representatives.

The Connecticut Compromise raised the issue about slaves. Should slaves be counted as part of the representation? If so, how would they be counted? States wanting slaves said "yes," while many northern states (that were emancipating their slaves) said "no."

A new compromise, called the "Three-Fifths Compromise," addressed this thorny issue. South Carolina had a lot of people who owned slaves and, therefore, this was one Compromise—where each slave was counted as 3/5 of 1—which South Carolina did not support.

Another concern was that a stronger U.S. national government might attempt to regulate trade, especially the international slave trade, by a tax on imports. Representatives at the Constitutional Convention reached a compromise on this issue, too. It was called the "Commerce Compromise," which stated that the federal government would not make any decisions on international slavery or tax imports for at least twenty years.

South Carolina supported a strong executive (President) with a term of six-seven years over the four years that became part of the final Constitution. The powerful elite, in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, had representatives who advocated for an aristocratic republic where only property owners could hold office.

A way to resolve this issue was to give states the right to decide on state voter requirements. Although South Carolina delegates did not get everything they wanted in the new constitution, they were content with how things went and returned home to urge others to support it with lobbying efforts to ratify it.

Again the political tensions between the Lowcountry and Upcountry played a major role in South Carolina ratifying the Constitution. Columbia was now the state capital, but the ratifying convention was held in Charleston. Lowcountry elites already had more representation and having the convention in Charleston made it easier for them to influence the proceedings, not only because of the unequal representation but also by the talk of the non-delegates.

Because of this, the Upcountry representatives did not have a strong voice in the state convention.

Constitutional opponents (called "backcountry," in many states, by the powerful elite) were called the "Anti-Federalists." They were called this because they feared a stronger federal government would lead to abuse of the individual by the power of the elite. They also feared the national government would be too far away from the average people, who had trouble-enough influencing their own state.

Charles Pickney, along with other powerful elites, were called "Federalists" because they wanted a strong national government which could influence foreign affairs. They also believed a strong central government would make new trade relationships to stabilize the economy which, in turn, would help return the state to prosperity.

South Carolinians ratified the proposed U.S. Constitution because the Anti-Federalists were outvoted. This action made South Carolina the eighth state to join the new nation of the United States.

Opposition to the Constitution, by the Anti-Federalists in several states, led to amending the Constitution with a new Bill of Rights. This action was completed by the First Congress.

Footnotes:

1) Harrison, Valerie and Jones, Cathy, plus others, Grade 8 Support Doc, SC Dept of Ed, Jul/21/2015, Jul/21/2015, <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Standards-Learning/documents/Grade8SupportDocument.pdf>

2) US Dept of State, Office of the Historian, U.S. Debt and Foreign Loans, 1775-1795, Jul/21/2015, Jul/20/2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1784-1800/loans>

3) Greenville Teachers, Problems/tensions between Up Country/Low Country following the Revolutionary War, eachers.greenville.k12.sc.us/.../Upcountry%20and%20Lowcountry%20, Dec/31/1969, Jul/21/2015, <http://teachers.greenville.k12.sc.us/sites/maltman/6%20New%20Nation/Upcountry%20and%20Lowcountry%202013%20with%20compromise%20of%201808.pdf>

4) History.com Staff, Shays' Rebellion, History.com, Jul/21/2015, Jul/20/2015, <http://www.history.com/topics/shays-rebellion>

5) Madison, James and Edmund Randolph, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, OurDocuments.gov, Dec/31/1969, Jul/21/2015, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=7>

6) U.S. Senate, 1787-1800 July 16, 1787 A Great Compromise, U.S. Senate, Dec/31/1969, Jul/21/2015,

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/A_Great_Compromise.htm

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/New-Governments-are-Created-South-Carolina-History>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/New-Governments-are-Created-South-Carolina-History>

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South Carolina

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