

## GOVERNEUR MORRIS

Good morning gentlemen of the press.

I understand that some of the opinions I have expressed during the debates at the Constitutional Convention are considered controversial, so I appreciate the opportunity to explain them more fully.

First, let me give you some background about my experience which may help in understanding my views. I was born into a family with, I am proud to say, a long history of public service. I graduated from King's College in New York City, read for the law

and admitted to the bar in 1771. I actively supported the efforts of our colonies to be free of British domination. I have served in the New York Revolutionary provincial congress, the New York legislature, and the Continental Congress.

I categorically deny that I believe that our new country should be run as an aristocracy. Neither do I believe that we should go to the opposite extreme and allow universal suffrage which would permit any man to vote. The key to a government that avoids these extremes of aristocratic or mob rule is to give the responsibility for voting to freeholders. Men who own property will be the faithful guardians of liberty for all. They have the greatest stake in a responsible, well functioning government and have the judgement and experience to make wise choices about candidates for public office.

If you give the votes to men who have no property they will sell them to the rich. Ignorant poor people will not know how to vote unless they are told and even the wage earner can easily be persuaded to favor his employer's interest and ignore his own. The man who cannot exercise his vote freely is not represented. It is the man who dictates the vote whose interests are protected.

Children do not vote. Why? Because they have no judgement, because they have no will of their own. Neither can the ignorant and the dependent be trusted with the public interest.

Some have said that limiting the right to vote to freeholders will exclude merchants and businessmen who may have a stake in public affairs. But those in the merchant class who truly have the public interest at heart will also have the wealth to acquire property which would then qualify them as freeholders. If not, they do not deserve it.

I will now be willing to answer any questions you have.

