

Option 1: Conserve the Power of the King

France is one of the world's great powers. We have achieved this through the greatness of our kings and their leadership. We have established colonies overseas that bring great wealth and glory to France. It is the soundness of our system that has allowed us to achieve so much. The system of Estates reflects the right and true order of the world. The king is nearest to God and then each of the Estates follow in order. The lowest-ranked priest must take precedence over any member of the nobility. Any member of the nobility must take precedence over even the wealthiest and most successful member of the Third Estate. Our system is based on the will of God. We have followed this system since the eleventh century. How dare we consider replacing it?

The financial crises of the past years have swept France into a kind of revolutionary fever. This is a dangerous path to follow. While our views are not popular, we must work to conserve the power of the king. It is the only way that we can conserve France's greatness. God has made the king the source of all authority and we must remind all French people that they are his subjects. They are here to serve him. The king must have an "absolute" veto that gives him final say over all legislation. We must not allow the uneducated masses into the political process. The idea that religions other than Roman Catholicism should be tolerated is both dangerous and absurd. That would only bring chaos and violence to France. We also know that women are not capable of participating in politics, and ending slavery is naive and foolish. Democratic ideas are dangerous as are the delusions of those in love with abstract ideas. But abstract ideas are no basis for governing. Ideas such as equality and liberty threaten the foundations of our society, including the king, the church, and our own wealth and privilege. Let us band together to protect the power of the king, the sanctity of the church, and the future of France.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. The king is God's agent on earth. The power to rule the nation remains in the king alone and comes from God.

2. The system of privileges for the nobility and clergy are what have made France a great empire. They must be preserved.

3. Change will bring instability and chaos to France and Europe.

4. The French masses are not worthy or capable of participating in politics. They are dangerous and must be ruled by their betters.

Supporting Arguments for Option 1

1. The king remains well-loved and is best-positioned to help solve the financial crisis.
2. Radical change could embolden the uneducated mobs like the ones seen at the Bastille. This is a danger to public safety.

3. Our eternal enemy Great Britain will take advantage of us if we weaken the authority of the king.

From the Historical Record

General Principles

Abbé Barruel, priest and writer, 1791

“You subject God’s agent [the king] to the people; you substitute the will of the people for the will God! What is this theology which puts the people in the place of God!”

Abbé Maury, Archbishop of Paris, member of the National Constituent Assembly, January 23, 1790

“The tyranny of a king is better than the tyranny of twelve hundred deputies.... If the people, as is claimed, are the source of all the political powers, the throne, in a monarchy, is their reservoir.”

Comte d’Antraigues, member of the National Constituent Assembly, pamphlet dated April 1790

“One could perhaps say that the existence of the throne is by divine right in this sense: that God himself has traced the duties of subjects toward kings; that as a result this form of government has received in advance the divine sanction, and that the duties of peoples toward kings and of kings toward peoples form a part of the obligations imposed on Christians by the law of God.”

Letter of King Louis XVI, August 26, 1789

“I will never consent to the plundering of my clergy and my nobles. Fine actions had earned them their privileges; the King of France must conserve those privileges for them.”

Jean-Joseph Mounier, member of the National Constituent Assembly, 1789

“We will never abandon our rights, but we cannot exaggerate them. We must not forget that the French are not a new people, recently emerged from the depths of the forest in order to form an association, but a society of 24 million men which wishes to strengthen the ties between its various parts, which wishes to regenerate the kingdom so that the principles of a true monarchy might be forever sacred.”

André-Boniface-Louis, Viccount of Mirabeau, pamphlet

“The same factions, the same conspirators who in France have sapped the foundations of throne and altar, who have delivered the royal family, the clergy, nobility, magistrates, and proprietors of all classes to the fury of a blind, unbridled people, would like to entrain in the same downfall all the princes and governments of Europe; the scoundrels see safety only in increased numbers of victims and accomplices.”

Veto

André-Boniface-Louis, Viccount of Mirabeau, pamphlet dated 1789

“It is not for his particular advantage that the monarch intervenes in legislation, but for the very interest of the people; ...the royal sanction is not the prerogative of the monarch, but the property, the domain of the nation.”

Jean-Joseph Mounier, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 5, 1789

“Democracy is a foolish dream in a large state. If the throne loses authority only to give way to the degrading yoke of aristocracy; and

feudal tyranny was established in France by the successive invasions of those who composed the general assemblies under the first and second dynasties of our kings; thus defense of the crown's independence is defense of the people's liberty.

“Therefore, we must give the greatest possible attention to the means by which we may secure executive power from all encroachments by legislative power. The most obvious means is to make the king an integral part of the legislative body and to require that the representatives' decisions be invested with the royal sanction in order to become laws.”

Political Participation

Petition of property owners, December 1788

“It must be recognized that there is a class of men who, by nature of their education and the kind of work to which they are doomed by their poverty, are equally devoid of ideas and willpower, and incapable, at present of taking part in public business.”

Jacques Antoine Marie de Cazalès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, February 5, 1791

“I do not think it necessary to point out... that proprietors [owners of property] alone are veritable citizens, that they constitute society itself, that it is only for the conservation of property that society is formed, that the public functions must be confided only to proprietors.”

Women's Role in Politics

Jean-Baptiste Amar, deputy to the Convention, October 30, 1793

“Should women exercise political rights and get mixed up in the affairs of government? Governing is ruling public affairs by laws whose making demands extended knowledge, an application and devotion without limit, a severe impassiveness; governing is ceaselessly directing the action of constituted authorities. Are women capable of these required attentions and qualities? We can respond in general: no... In general, women are hardly capable of lofty conceptions and serious cogitations.”

Religion

Abbé Maury, archbishop of Paris, member of the National Constituent Assembly, December 23, 1789

“Calling Jews citizens would be like saying that without letters of naturalization and without ceasing to be English and Danish, the English and Danish would be French... The sweat of Christian slaves waters the furrow in which the opulence of the Jews germinates... People feel for the Jews a hatred that cannot fail to explode as a result of this aggrandizement. For their own safety, we should table this matter.

“It should not be concluded from what I have said about Jews that I confuse Protestants with them. Protestants have the same religion and the same laws as us, but they do not have same creed... I see no reason to deliberate on the section that concerns them in the proposed motion.”

Slavery

Governor of Guadeloupe, October 1789

“We must expect strange revolutions. Not only must we fear an insurrection by the whites but even one by our natural enemies [the slaves], whose behavior suggests hidden cabals [plots].”

Monseron de L'Aunay, deputy of the Nantes Chamber of Commerce, December 24, 1789

“You send me alarming news from our sugar islands, principally from Saint Domingue. The inhabitants of that island may all be currently being held at knife point by negroes in revolt...”

“Consider that these colonies are France's destiny. Consider the sixty million [francs] profit from their exports each year. Consider that their capital of three billion [francs] is the sacred property of their owners...”

“Our eternal rival [Great Britain]...smiles at our misfortunes and...foresees the scepter of their world-wide domination that no human force would be able to take from them.”