

## Option 2: Create a Constitutional Monarchy

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**W**e continue to love our king with all of our hearts. But the world is changing. We need only to look across the water to our eternal foe Great Britain for a model of what kind of government works well. Here in France we should create a constitutional monarchy and a representative assembly. The king is a great man who loves his people, but he is not well served by the courtesans whose primary goal is to preserve their wealth and privileges. Look where that has gotten us. We have faced an ongoing financial crises and many of the people of France go hungry. This need not continue. Times have changed. As our understanding of the principles that govern the universe has changed so has our understanding of what principles should govern the people of France. Rationality and reason can help us create a new constitution for France that gives the king a role in a more representative government.

It is time to cast away the ancient traditions that prevent France from moving forward. But let us be cautious. We must be careful so that we do not discard what makes us great and what unifies us. The king must understand that his purpose is to serve the people of France, and that it is only through their consent that he rules. The king must not be given an “absolute” veto over legislation. A “suspensive” veto, which will allow him to reject legislation unless it is passed by three consecutive assemblies is a better approach. This is one step towards creating a system of checks and balances between the different branches of government. Although the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen embraces equality, let us define carefully what we mean by equality. For example, although the system of slavery is oppressive, we can not afford to end it. We must create a representative assembly that property-owning Frenchmen can select. Neither women nor those who do not pay taxes are ready to participate in politics. We must open our minds and tolerate other religions besides Roman Catholicism. Let us not be divided by our religious beliefs; let us be united by the fact that we are citizens of a new France. Let us all join together and celebrate the beginning of a new glorious era for France. Long live the king!

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

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1. The king remains the rightful ruler of France. A constitutional monarchy is the way for France to solve its problems.

2. We must rely on rationality and reason to improve the function of our government.

3. A well thought-out system of checks and balances in our new constitution will prevent abuses of power, tyranny, and corruption.

4. Radical political ideas and too much change would be dangerous.

## Supporting Arguments for Option 2

1. Preserving a central role for the king in governing France is supported by the majority.

2. Great Britain provides an excellent model of a functioning constitutional monarchy. Although they are our great rivals, we would be happy to match their success.

3. Ending corruption and unfair privileges of the nobles and clergy will unshackle the French economy and allow France to prosper.

## From the Historical Record

### General Principles

*Jérôme Pétion de Villeneuve, member of the National Constituent Assembly*

“There is said to be a contract between the king and the nation. I deny the principle. The king can only govern according to the laws that the nation presents to him.”

*Pierre Victor Malouet, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1, 1789*

“The nation is waiting for us; it wants order, peace, and protective laws.... I believe, sirs, that it is necessary in a large empire for men placed by circumstances in a dependent condition to see the just limits on [liberty] as much as the extension of natural liberty....”

*Jean-Baptiste-René Robinet, writer and scientist, November 1789*

“There are no longer any provinces!... Instead, say that there are provinces, and that they are all national, all French, because there are no longer any distinctions, or privileges, or interests or spirit of particularism. Patriotism is not in the names, but the soul.... Let us conclude that new divisions are not necessary.

“You have made some indispensable destructions, some advantageous and infinitely useful destructions. It is necessary to take care not to push too far. It will no longer be regeneration: it will be abuse and excess.”

*The National Constituent Assembly, August 4-11, 1789*

“The National Assembly solemnly proclaims King Louis XVI Restorer of French Liberty.

“The National Assembly abolishes the feudal regime entirely....”

*Reynaud de Montlosier, member of the National Constituent Assembly*

“Obviously, I had no desire for the exaggerated liberty and Revolutionary equality as they were conceived...but neither did I wish to return to the despotism of the Old Regime. [I seek] suppression of past abuses, while respecting the principal foundation of the previous system.”

*Pierre Victor Malouet, July 21, 1789*

“It is important to be sensible, deliberate, moderate, cool...otherwise we will destroy and tear and break everything, and whatever we build will not stand.”

*Administrative Department of Cantal message to the National Constituent Assembly, 1790*

“Subservient to the will of a single individual, debased by the feudal regime, they groaned under arbitrary laws that favored the rich and powerful and weighed down only those whom they were supposed to protect. They were not free and [now] they are free under the single dominion of a common law found on reason and equality.

“We reiterate, gentlemen, in the name of all the inhabitants of the Department of Cantal, the inviolable oath that they carry in their hearts to be forever faithful to the constitution, to the nation, to the law and to the king.”

### Veto

*Abbé Henri Grégoire, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 4, 1789*

“Unfortunately, kings are men; flattered by courtesans, and often escorted by lies, truth reaches their thrones only with difficulty.

Unfortunately, kings, badly brought up for the most part have tumultuous passions. One of the most deeply rooted in the human heart, one of the most ardent, is the thirst for power and the penchant for extending its empire. A king capable of dominating by the ascendancy of his genius, like Louis XIV, who did everything out of vanity, and who will always put himself before his people; by virtue of an absolute veto, such a king will rapidly encroach upon legislative power by the facility of wielding the lever of executive power alone.... You will have a despot.

“I opine for the suspensive veto, which being only an appeal to the people retains their right to it; but I am opposed with all my might to an absolute veto, which reduces the Nation to a subaltern role, whereas it is everything, and which becomes the most terrible arm of despotism.”

### Political Participation

*Abbe Sieyès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789*

“All the inhabitants of a country should enjoy the rights of a passive citizen; all have the right to the protection of their person, their property, their liberty, etc.; but all do not have the right to take an active part in the formation of the public authorities: all are not active citizens. Women, at least in the present state, children, foreigners, those who contribute nothing to maintaining the public establishment, should have no active influence on public affairs.”

### Women’s Role in Politics

*Louis-Marie Prudhomme, newspaper publisher, “On the Influence of the Revolution on Women,” February 12, 1791*

“Many women have complained to us about the revolution. They report to us for two years now it seems there is but one sex in France. In the primary assemblies, in the sections, in the clubs, etc., there is no longer any discussion about women, as if they no longer existed. They are accorded, as if by grace, a few benches for listening to the session of the National Assembly.

“Citizenesses of all ages and stations! Leave your homes all at the same; rally from door to door and march toward city hall.... Once the country is purged...we will see you return to your dwellings to take up once again the accustomed yoke of domestic duties.”

*Abbe Sieyès, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789*

“Women, at least in the present state, children, foreigners, those who contribute nothing to maintaining the public establishment, should have no active influence on public affairs.”

### Religion

*Count de Clermont Tonnerre, member of the National Constituent Assembly, August 1789  
December 23, 1789*

“...an honorable member has explained to us that the non-Catholics of some provinces still experience harassment based on former laws, and seeing them excluded from the elections and public posts, another honorable member has protested against the effect of prejudice that persecutes some professions....

“[Some] say to me, the Jews have their own judges and laws. I respond that is your fault. We must refuse everything to Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals.... In short, Sirs, the presumed status of every man resident in the country is to be a citizen.”

### Slavery

*Antoine-Pierre Barnave, member of the National Constituent Assembly, March 8, 1790*

“Abandon the colonies, and these sources of prosperity will disappear or diminish.

“Abandon the colonies, and you will import, at great price, from foreigners what they buy today from you.”

*Antoine-Pierre Barnave, member of the National Constituent Assembly, September 1791*

“This regime is oppressive, but it gives a livelihood to several million Frenchmen. This regime is barbarous but a still greater barbarity will result if you interfere with it without the necessary knowledge.”