

The Articles of Confederation

After the Americans declared their independence from Great Britain, they realized that there was a great need for plan of government that would unite the states. On June 11, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a committee to devise a workable plan of unity. One month later the committee, headed by John Dickinson of Delaware, had written such a plan. It was called the **Articles of Confederation**. The word *confederation* means association, and the new document called a "firm league of friendship" among the states. Although the delegates adopted the Articles of Confederation in 1777, they were not ratified by all the states until 1781 and the plan was finally approved as the first constitution for the new nation. The government set up was made up of only one branch - Congress.

1. What are the Articles of Confederation? the first constitution of the United States
2. Why were the Articles of Confederation written? to unite the 13 states

People were afraid to develop another strong central government. They had been opposed to the strong power of the King of England and they did not want that situation repeated in their new government. They decided to give most of the power to the individual states. Each state was given one vote in Congress, and nine votes were needed to pass a law. Any amendment (a change to the law) to the Articles would need the approval of all thirteen states. These rulings made an agreement on any proposed law quite difficult.

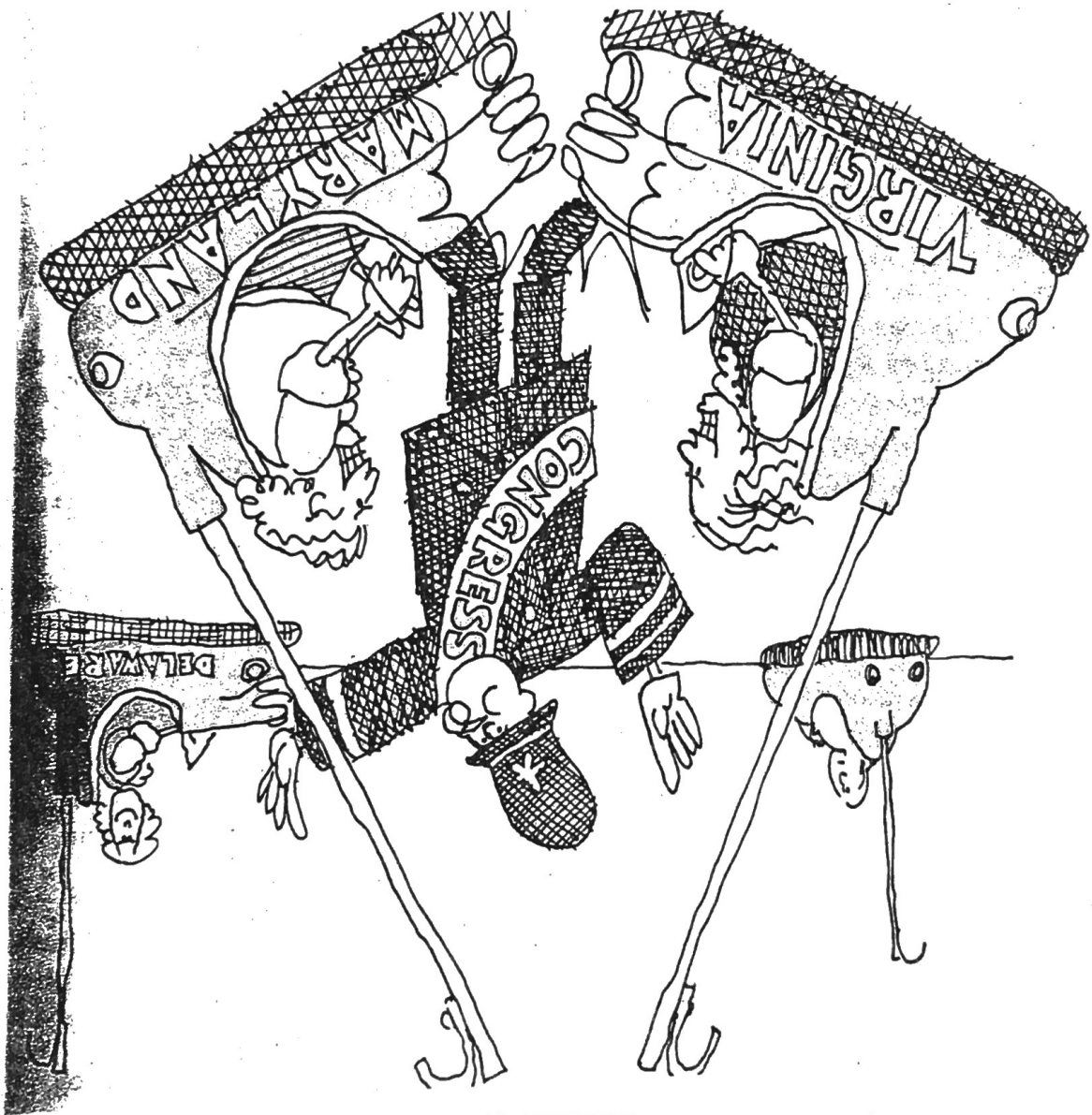
3. Why were the Founding Fathers afraid to give Congress too much power? they were afraid of another king

Under the Articles, Congress could declare war, make treaties, manage Indian affairs, establish post offices, coin money (each state could coin their own money), borrow money and admit new states. While each power was important, the states did not surrender too much of their own power to the central government.

The Articles of Confederation was very weak and lacked the necessary powers needed to run the new country effectively. Foreign nations did not respect our territory, Congress could only ask the states for money (Congress cannot tax), Congress needed to ask for troops for the army and navy (with the states often ignored), trade between states could not be controlled, no national court system existed, and there was no national executive (President) under the new Constitution.

4. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles?
strengths - declare war, establish post offices, etc.
weaknesses - no president, no court system, etc.

5. What were the challenges of governing the country under the Articles?
they lacked the power to run the country effectively



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- How does this picture illustrate the problems of Congress under the Articles of Confederation?

Name _____

Date .. _____