IN HIS OWN WORDS: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND THE ALBANY PLAN OF UNION

Excerpts from the Albany Plan of Union (1754) and the United States Constitution (1788)

Directions: Compare the selected portions of the Albany Plan to the corresponding excerpts from the Constitution. List the ways in which the sections are similar and then the ways in which they are different.

1: Preamble and Federal System

Albany Plan
(Preamble): It is proposed that humble application be made for an act of Parliament of Great Britain, by virtue of which one general government may be formed in America, including all the said colonies, within and under which government each colony may retain its present constitution, except in the particulars wherein a change may be directed by the said act, as hereafter follows.

Constitution
(Preamble): We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

(Tenth Amendment): The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

2: Branches of Government

Albany Plan
(1): [It is proposed] that the said general government be administered by a President-General, to be appointed and supported by the crown; and a Grand Council, to be chosen by the representatives of the people of the several Colonies met in their respective assemblies.

(4): There shall be a new election of the members of the Grand Council every three years.

Constitution
(Article II, Section 1, Clause 1): The Executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.

(Article I, Section 1): All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

(Article I, Section 2, Clause 1): The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several States.

(Article I, Section 3, Clause 1): The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the legislature thereof, for six years.

Benjamin Franklin
3: Legislative Process

Albany Plan
(6): The Grand Council shall meet once in every year, and oftener if occasion require.

(9): [It is proposed] that the assent of the President-General be requisite to all acts of the Grand Council, and that it be his office and duty to cause them to be carried into execution.

Constitution
(Article I, Section 4, Clause 2): The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year.

(Article I, Section 7, Clause 2): Every bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a law, be presented to the president of the United States; if he approve, he shall sign it, but if not, he shall return it, with his objections, to that house in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the objections at large on their journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such reconsideration, two thirds of that house shall agree to pass the bill, it shall be sent, together with the objections, to the other house, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two-thirds of that house, it shall become a law.

(Article II, Section 3): [The President] shall take care that the Laws be faithfully executed.

4: Military Powers

Albany Plan
(10): [It is proposed] that the President-General, with the advice of the Grand Council, hold or direct all Indian treaties, in which the general interest of the Colonies may be concerned; and make peace or declare war with Indian nations.

(23): [It is proposed] that all military commission officers, whether for land or sea service, to act under this general constitution, shall be nominated by the President-General; but the approbation of the Grand Council is to be obtained, before they receive their commissions.

Constitution
(Article I, Section 8, Clause 11): [The Congress shall have the power] to declare war.

(Article II, Section 2, Clause 1): The President shall be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several States, when called into the actual service of the United States.

(Article II, Section 2, Clause 2): He shall have power, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to make treaties, provided two-thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States.
5: Power of Taxation

Albany Plan
(16): That for these purposes [the President-General and the Grand Council] have power to make laws, and lay and levy such general duties, imposts, or taxes, as to them shall appear most equal and just (considering the ability and other circumstances of the inhabitants in the several Colonies), and such as may be collected with the least inconvenience to the people; rather discouraging luxury, than loading industry with unnecessary burdens.

Constitution
(Article I, Section 8, Clause 1): The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.