

## America Under the Articles of Confederation

After declaring their independence from England in 1776, the former colonies realized the need for a plan of government. Although most of the new states wrote their own state constitutions, there were many who saw the need for a more centralized government.

John Dickinson, a delegate to the Continental Congress from Pennsylvania, took up the task and the result of his work was a plan which became known as the Articles of Confederation. Under the Articles, the government was largely dependent on the states for its power. Although Congress adopted the Articles in 1777, it was not until March 1781, that they were accepted by all the states. They served as the country's form of government from 1781 to 1789.

Under the Articles, the Congress was the powerful branch of government. Congress could

1) declare war, 2) make treaties, 3) manage Indian affairs, 4) establish post offices, 5) coin money, 6) borrow money, and 7) admit new states. While each power was important, the states did not surrender too much power to the central government. Technically, Congress represented the state governments, not the people.

As an experiment, the Articles of Confederation had severe weaknesses: 1) foreign nations did not respect our territory, 2) Congress could only *ask* the states for money and enlistments for the army and navy, with the states often ignoring such requests, 3) paper Continental dollars were worthless, 4) trade between states could not be controlled, 5) no national court system existed, and 6) there was no national executive, later called **President** under the new Constitution.

### Review and Write

1. When did the Congress feel the need to draw up a national plan of government? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who authored the Articles of Confederation? \_\_\_\_\_

### Complete the Chart

List the weaknesses and strengths (powers) of the government under the Articles in decreasing order of importance, with the most important strength and the most serious weakness listed first. Be prepared to explain your selections and their order.

**Articles of Confederation**

Strengths	Weaknesses
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.