

The Confederation Era

One American's Story

After the Revolutionary War, the nation faced hard economic times. People had little money, but the states continued to levy high taxes. In Massachusetts, many farmers fell deeply into debt.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“I have been obliged to pay and nobody will pay me. I have lost a great deal by this man and that man . . . and the great men are going to get all we have, and I think it is time for us to rise and put a stop to it. . . .”

—Plough Jogger, quoted in *The People Speak: American Voices, Some Famous, Some Little Known*

From August 1786 to February 1787, Daniel Shays, a Revolutionary War veteran, led Jogger and other farmers in an armed uprising. To protest what the farmers viewed as unfair taxation, they attacked county courts in Massachusetts. At first, using force, they succeeded in stopping the courts from selling farmers' possessions and jailing people who couldn't pay their debts.

The state militia put down **Shays's Rebellion**, as the uprising came to be known. But many people sided with the farmers. America's leaders realized that a popular armed uprising spelled danger to the new nation. It was clearly time to talk about a stronger national government.

Forming a New Government

▼ **KEY QUESTION** What did the states want from a national government?

Ten years before Shays's Rebellion, the colonists had resisted the harsh rule of a distant government. As Americans planned their first national government, in 1776-1777, their main goal was to prevent governmental tyranny from reappearing in the new nation.

Republicanism and Citizenship American leaders felt strongly that the people needed to exercise control over their government. It was decided that the new nation would be a **republic**, a country in which the people choose



Shays's rebels take over a Massachusetts courthouse. Today a stone marker rests on the spot of the rebellion.