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## Preface

Warren E. Burger

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# Preface

By WARREN E. BURGER\*

It is commendable that the editors of the *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* have chosen as the theme for this symposium issue the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. Our great charter, as we know, was debated and drafted by delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia from May to September, 1787. Thirty-nine of those delegates signed the Constitution on September 17, 1787, and it was then submitted to the states for ratification.

Too few of us have a sufficient appreciation for the vitality of the Constitution, which is evidenced by its having withstood nearly 200 years of change, including a Civil War, two World Wars, and more than four decades of "cold war." The Constitution's vitality, of course, is the result of careful craftsmanship by a band of remarkable minds—"demigods" Jefferson called them—who understood the importance of a system of government sufficiently strong to meet the exigencies of the day, yet sufficiently flexible to accommodate and adapt to new political, economic, and social conditions. This Bicentennial era presents an opportunity for reflection on this "miracle at Philadelphia."<sup>1</sup>

This volume contains articles by several distinguished authors on various aspects of the system of government created by our Constitution. One need not agree with everything that is said to find the articles provocative and useful. Above all, they show that, even after 200 years, there is still ample room for debate about the Constitution.

I salute the editors and authors for this contribution to the celebration of the Bicentennial. All of us should take advantage of this occasion to give ourselves a good history and civics lesson on the Constitution.

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\* Chairman, Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution; Chief Justice of the United States, 1969-1986.

1. Catherine Drinker Bowen aptly described the events of the Philadelphia Convention in her book, C. BOWEN, *MIRACLE AT PHILADELPHIA* (1966).

