

Baron Beelen-Bertholff to Count Trauttmannsdorf, Philadelphia, 31 May 1788 (excerpts)

The critical moment in which the new Republic presently finds itself has almost benumbed and suspended everything; nothing is discussed from Savannah to Penobscot except the new form of government and its consequences; they are tossed between fear and hope....

P.S.

Further result and current state of things relative to the plan of a new constitution for the government of the United States of America.

Maryland is unexpectedly the seventh of the United States to adopt the new constitution; its deputies and delegates proceeded to deal with it with a speed that will perhaps be unique in the new Republic; the plan was read, discussed, and considered for the first time the 21st; it was agreed to, ratified and signed purely and simply last April 28th by the delegates of the people of Maryland.

The prediction, mentioned in P.S., labeled A, joined to my very humble account of last March 22nd, was confirmed; New Hampshire has just acceded along with the seven other states.

All the letters from Carolina are united in assuring that its acceptance will take place in a few days.³ In that case the matter would be completed, because it is decreed that the ratification of nine states will give life to this new form of government; I believe I am able to say with certainty to Your Excellency that even if the two Carolinas should delay it further, it is not doubted that things will be at this point in three or four weeks.

It is thus, My Lord, even in Virginia, where it appeared until now that the voters would not unite, or at least would unite with great difficulty, for the new constitution, considering the force of the arguments and the characters of the people who expounded them; there is now such a preponderance for agreeing that it is not at all probable that the minority will be able to succeed in counterbalancing it; as for the state of New York, it is rumored here that the members of the body appointed to deliberate on it are federalists; this now leaves only Rhode Island, which continues to be the only one of the 13 states that seems not to have decided to unite on this advantageous plan, more, according to what I have occasion to believe, from a division in the opinions of her legislators than from any other cause to which the public papers in Europe attribute it.

Having communicated to Your Excellency the individual sentiments of Washington, Franklin, Lee and Jay on the plan of the constitution in question, it appeared to me that that of the American minister to the London court, Adams, given on this subject in one of his letters to Colonel Smith, could be added to them; I take the liberty of enclosing here the extract of that letter. ...

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