

Baron Beelen-Bertholff to Count Trauttmansdorf, Philadelphia, 1 August 1788 (excerpt)

I, among others, brought to Your Excellency's attention in all humility and lastly by my very humble accounts of 28 March and 31 May last, the state of things relative to the much debated plan of a new constitution for the government of the United States of America.

Would Your Excellency graciously permit me to refer to it and to limit myself to informing you further, My Lord, by means of the English packet boat, which, I have just learned expects to depart in several days for New York and Halifax, as it will henceforward be, that with the exception of North Carolina, this plan is now agreed to and ratified by eleven of the 13 states and that we are daily expecting to learn of the accession of North Carolina; I enter into more details on this subject in my very humble account, which is now at hand.

Since the votes of only nine states were needed to put this constitution into operation, congress did not delay in making the necessary arrangements; it decreed that in December next they will proceed to the choice of a President general on the basis set forth in the plan.

The unanimous wish is for Mr. Washington, but it is questionable whether he will agree to do it; Mr. Hancock, governor of Massachusetts, is the second choice; however, it will not be before next spring that the new constitution will attain the stability and ends desired.

Its influences on commerce will first be perceived by some European nations; the effects will be evident and very advantageous for those having treaties with the United States; the uniformity and consistency of customs laws, will soon lead to the return of confidence.

Be that as it may, My Lord, our political situation with respect to the new Republic will still depend on the activity and understanding of our manufacturers and merchants to make the best of the many products of our national industries that I have successively mentioned, it would doubtless be better if we had agreed to treat each other as most-favored nations.

The kind of anarchy that was reigning here has dissipated, the loss of credit will necessarily be succeeded by a general confidence and on rather solid foundations, even though the rush of confidence that followed so suddenly after the peace was little more than an unbelievable enthusiasm, to the detriment of Europeans—except England—who, with the Dutch, recouped their losses through persistence....

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