

## **Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin New York, 16 March 1788 (excerpt)**

The general expectation has been singularly disappointed by the resolution made by the Convention of the State of Newhampshire to adjourn to the third tuesday of June, which will be the 17th. The majority of votes against the new Constitution there was 70. to 40. It seems certain that most of the members of the Convention, who have voted against the Constitution were bound by the instructions of their constituents, which forced them to vote contrary to the belief, with which the federalists inspired them afterwards, in the necessity and usefulness of the new plan. It is only in this way that one can explain the adherence of a great number to the proposition of the minority to adjourn to reconsider the proposed Constitution after having allowed the people the time to give new instructions to their representatives. This motion passed with a plurality of 53. to 51.

The State of Rhodeisland, which for a long time has separated itself from the others by the singularity of its conduct and where the common people entirely dominate, made a rather peculiar resolution. Instead of taking the advice of the people through the channel of its representatives in a general Convention, the Legislature has submitted the examination of the new federal Constitution to the conventicles formed in each district. The majority of the districts must decide on its adoption. The Demagogues, who govern the people by flattering them, undoubtedly hope in this way to cause the rejection of the Constitution, whose design is to curb their excesses. However they could be deluded in their expectation, if the Quakers who are quite numerous in that State align themselves with the Federalists for fear of the abuse of paper money, the terrible weapon, with which the demagogues attack and destroy the propertied class in general.

The fear of little security for their property disturbs all who possess any; the eagerness to acquire property or to be absolved of their debts arouses a great number of opponents to the new Constitution. Those of this opinion find in paper money a means to free themselves or to become rich by forcing the acceptance of this imaginary money, which they create and abolish at will, when they are able to dominate the State Legislatures. Thus one can count among the Federalists the majority of landowners and among the Antifederalists the Bankrupts, the men of bad faith, the needy and the men who could not exercise any power whatsoever in their States, except if it did not exist in the general Government. The generality of the people divide themselves among their Leaders. Until now there seemed to be more moderation among the Federalists than among their adversaries. But every day it becomes more difficult to judge what the outcome of this power struggle will be. Just as a Government can be built that is solid, united, durable, it is equally possible for one to see it dissipate into the shadow of a body which until now seemed invested with the power of the Confederation. The dissolution of Congress is an event as likely to happen as its regeneration. Interested observers consequently cannot stop themselves from speculating according to these two hypotheses.

It would be principally in a political report that the difference between the consolidation or the division of the American Confederation would be touched....

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