CONFEDERATION CONGRESS CALLS THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, 21 February 1787

Congress assembled as before.

The report of a grand committee consisting of Mr. [Nathan] Dane, Mr. [James M.] Varnum, Mr. S[tephen] M[ix] Mitchell, Mr. [Melancton] Smith, Mr. [Lambert] Cadwallader, Mr. [William] Irwine, Mr. N[athaniel] Mitchell, Mr. [Uriah] Forrest, Mr. [William] Grayson, Mr. [William] Blount, Mr. [John] Bull, and Mr. [William] Few to whom was referred a letter of 14 September 1786 from J[ohn] Dickinson written at the request of commissioners from the states of Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York assembled at the city of Annapolis together with a copy of the report of the said commissioners to the legislatures of the states by whom they were appointed, being an order of the day was called up and which is contained in the following resolution, viz:

"Congress having had under consideration the letter of John Dickinson, Esquire, chairman of the commissioners who assembled at Annapolis during the last year, also the proceedings of the said commissioners and entirely coinciding with them as to the inefficiency of the federal government and the necessity of devising such farther provisions as shall render the same adequate to the exigencies of the Union do strongly recommend to the different legislatures to send forward delegates to meet the proposed convention on the second Monday in May next at the city of Philadelphia."

The delegates for the state of New York thereupon laid before Congress instructions which they had received from their constituents and in pursuance of the said instructions moved to postpone the farther consideration of the report in order to take up the following proposition, to wit:

"That it be recommended to the states composing the Union that a convention of representatives from the said states respectively be held at_____on_____for the purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the United States of America and reporting to the United States in Congress assembled and to the states respectively such alterations and amendments of the said Articles of Confederation as the representatives met in such convention shall judge proper and necessary to render them adequate to the preservation and support of the Union."

On the question to postpone for the purpose above mentioned the yeas and nays being required by the delegates for New York.

So the question was lost.

A motion was then made by the delegates for Massachusetts to postpone the farther consideration of the report in order to take into consideration a motion which they read in their place. This being agreed to, the motion of the delegates for Massachusetts was taken up and, being amended, was agreed to as follows:

“Whereas there is provision in the Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union for making alterations therein by the assent of a Congress of the United States and of the legislatures of the several states; and whereas experience hath evinced that there are defects in the present Confederation, as a mean to remedy which several of the states and particularly the state of New York by express instructions to their delegates in Congress have suggested a convention for the purposes expressed in the following resolution and such convention appearing to be the most probable mean of establishing in these states a firm national government.

“Resolved that in the opinion of Congress it is expedient that on the second Monday in May next a convention of delegates who shall have been appointed by the several states be held at Philadelphia for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation and reporting to Congress and the several legislatures such alterations and provisions therein as shall when agreed to in Congress and confirmed by the states render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government and the preservation of the Union.”

Cite as: The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution Digital Edition, ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
Canonic URL: http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-01-01-02-0005-0004 [accessed 11 May 2011]
Original source: Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787, Volume I: Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787