

Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, Boston, 20 January 1788 (excerpts)

... [Enclosure:] On Monday it was moved that Mr Gerry should be requested to attend the debates of Convention, and answer any questions of fact touching the proposed frame of Govt—the federalists wish'd that he might be requested to attend and give his reasons for not putting his signature to the Constitution—but so many, were anxious to gratify the opponents in attaining, what they thought information on the subject, that the first motion pass'd, as a compromise—on tuesday he attended having been waited upon by a committee, from the body, to request his attendance for this purpose—the C[om]mittee was composed of men, by name, Wedgery Nason & Spring, whom, six months since Mr Gerry & evry good man heartily despised, as devoid of principle & fomenters of faction—men who are indebted to the late tumults in this Commonwealth for their present situation—

In the afternoon of Monday, the first paragraph of the Constitution was read—objections were stated, that in so important a concern, an invocation of the deity ought to have preceded the plan—this was passed sub silentio—No objections were raised to the first section of the first article—the second was warmly opposed, & most of the arguments pro & con, are in the papers—the second paragraph met with like observations—3d paragraph was the object of much discussion, but was explaind much to the satisfaction of good & reasonable men—these & the two last sections took up the attention of the house till friday night—when a question, for the first time, was proposed to Mr Gerry viz Why Georgia was entitled to three rep's, under this Constitution, and Ma'ss'ts but to eight, when in former requisitions on Ma'ss'ts, she had been requir'd to pay thirteen times the amount Georgia was assess'd—a motion was made by Mr Dana, at the request of Mr G— as he declard in Convention, & Mr Gerry acceded to, that the question should be reduced to writing, & the answer in writing be laid on the table—this was complied with on Saturday morning—a debate then ensued on the first paragraph in the 3d section—and an objection was raised against the equality of the representation of the states in the senate—Mr Strong stated that this was a matter of long debate in the fed. convention—& that a committee consisting of a member from each state in the Convention was appointed to consider the subject—that, in regard to an equality of representation of states in the senate the committee unanimously agreed & so reported to Convention—soon after Mr G. attempted to address the Convention, saying he had suited in writing some observations on the section in debate—this produced an argument warm, but decent, on the propriety of Mr G, or any other person obtruding sentiments on the house—and a question, by one Wedgery, was proposed in writing, desiring Mr G. to communicate information & opinion on the proposed section—this was opposed on the following ground—That Mr Gerry was called to that body merely to answer questions of fact—that if the opinion or reasons of any man not a member were taken in that house, it was a delegation of power the Convention had no authority to delegate, & appointing one a member, who was not a rep. of the people—in the heat of debate a motion for adjournment prevaild—after which Mr G. in great warmth observd to Mr Dana that he would not be sacrific'd by partial representation Mr Dana replied he would not sacrifice the dignity of the Convention to any man—that he, Mr G. was appointed by the Legislature—to them he stated his objections & offer'd to give the reasons of his objections—but they who alone had a right to make this enquiry declin'd it—Mr Gerry said he was obliged to attend Convention—this

was denied by Mr Dana—and the debate growing warm, Mr King interfered & the gentlemen retir'd to their lodgings—Mr Dana attended by good men of all classes—& Mr Gerry by the opponents of the present constitution, who to say the least, are in patriotism, property & morality of no certain estimation—

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