

Louis-Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 16 August 1788

M. le Comte de Moustier having departed for a trip to the Northern Regions of this State, I have the honor of recounting to You what has happened of most importance since his departure.

North Carolina is the last State that has deliberated on the adoption of the new Constitution. It was hoped that she would conform to the politics of Virginia as on almost all other occasions; but if one believes the private intelligence we received the day before yesterday, the Constitution was rejected there by a majority of 176 votes to 76. Congress is waiting for the official confirmation at any moment of this event, which would bode ill for the success of the new system of *consolidation*. The southern part of the United States, which despite its extensiveness and the growth of its population is nothing less than contemptible, would find itself cut off by a foreign territory. It is asserted that Virginia Antifederalists have great influence in North Carolina, and it is because of their maneuvers that that State has taken such a firm position. Newyork Antifederalists also had an extended correspondence with them, and, before they might have been able to know in Carolina that the New York Antifederalists had changed their scheme, it was resolved not to assent to the proposed Government.—It is impossible to foresee what the effect will be on the new Constitution, but one has reason to hope at least that because the North Carolina Delegates will no longer be able to vote in Congress for the adjournment of the new Government, the party that wanted to leave Newyork will find itself enfeebled and that this Assembly will remain in this city. They will follow in this regard in the footsteps of the Rhodeisland Delegates who withdrew to render an account to their Constituents of the bad effect this State's non-ratification of the new system produced in Congress and of the arrangements that seemed to exist to force Rhode-island to assent to this Government.

I am aware, My Lord, to what extent these details are of little interest for the Court; they serve, however, to complete the information on a revolution that could become very important, although there is no reason yet to revive the doubts that I had the honor of submitting to you from the beginning. I still sustain the belief that however perfect the new plan of Government might be, it suits neither the spirit nor the situation of the Americans. I would not even have restrained myself from doubting its success if some respectable and enlightened men, whose patriotism has perhaps gone astray, did not find themselves at the head of this great operation. Their names ought at least to inspire me with distrust of my own insight. Moreover, chance could produce what better judgment could not have effected. Such would be, among others, the sudden eruption of a war between the maritime powers of Europe, from which the Americans could fear the repercussion and which would oblige them to reunite anew to repulse the insults to which their Commerce and even their coasts would be exposed. It seems therefore most sure and most consistent with wise foresight to suppose, from this moment, the possibility of the establishment of the new system and to consider the role that will be most suitable to play in America when the scattered resources of this vast Continent will find themselves reunited in a center.

New hostilities carried out by the Savages of Ohio support the efforts of Federalists and

favor Consolidation. If, in imitation of the Roman Senate and in adopting a more profound policy than the present composition of Congress allows, this Assembly succeeded in instigating a general war with these turbulent neighbors, a coalition of all parties would undoubtedly result, and the noise of guns would stifle the powerless cries of Democrats, who never stop agitating in the popular Assemblies and who only just discovered that the Government that is proposed to them must serve to bridle their ambition in seizing from the people an excessive power that it had abused.—The uneasiness, the treachery, the ferocity of the Savages and the less than prudent intrigues of England will perhaps produce this beneficial effect sooner or later. The treaty that the Governor of the West was to have concluded with these tribes was just delayed by an unexpected accident; a party of Savages took by force the gifts that were destined for them and massacred those who carried them; by this means they avoided concluding a treaty that did not suit them without losing their gifts, to which they are very attached. It is certain that if these barbarians understood their true interests they would have combatted, with all their forces, the numerous settlements the Americans are making on the Ohio. They are rendering, at the same time, an essential service to the confederation, not only in furnishing it with a pretext to raise troops, but in putting an end to the emigrations that constantly weaken the United States. The Savages will end up being the victims of their lack of foresight; the Colony of Muskingum is composed of the most courageous and most adventurous men of New England; when it has succeeded in solidly establishing its new settlements, the united efforts of all the Savage nations will be insufficient to expel it, and it will easily be able to push back the long-standing inhabitants beyond the Lakes. Congress just gave some of the most extensive powers to her Governor without considering that he will not know how to fortify himself in that place without weakening the union in dispersing over an immense area, a small population that, according to the most favorable estimates, still does not total three million and in encouraging settlements that in less than twenty years will throw off the yoke of the United States and govern themselves with their own laws.

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-03-18-02-0096> [accessed 08 Mar 2011]

Original source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XVIII: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 6