

## Louis-Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 10 October 1787

The public was still occupied with the perusal of the new Constitution and seemed disposed to admire it on the whole, when the imprudence of the legislative Assembly of Pennsylvania all at once revived the jealousy and the anxiety of the democratic party. By a peculiarity which is difficult to account for, Pennsylvania had only been represented in the General Convention by citizens from the county of Philadelphia; the other counties whose interests have always been different from those of the capital were hardly satisfied with this, and when the question was taken in the legislature to order the election of a convention to ratify the new Federal Constitution, their representatives took a decision to stay away. The majority immediately sent a bailiff of the chamber to compel the members of the minority to surrender to the Assembly; the populace, taking part in this quarrel, carried some people off to the legislative chamber. This violent proceeding furnished very heated debates and the next day a justificatory account was published signed by 17 dissident members, in which they indulged in the most alarming observations against the aristocratic party and even against the members of the General Convention.

The conduct of the two factions has been equally disapproved of by true patriots. In forcing the minority to consent to the ratification of the new government without investigation, the legislature made use of a harshness and a precipitancy that should render this government very suspect. On the other hand, the minority did not have any right to disregard the summons of the chamber, and in spreading misgivings on the new Constitution from the beginning it could strike it a fatal blow. These members were highly disapproved of by their constituents and they have been replaced by other men; but the alarm is sounded, the public is on its guard and they begin to examine strictly what they would have adopted almost blindly.

These dissidents, sir, avail themselves of a very embarrassing argument to weaken the new Constitution. They are saying that the members of the Convention exceeded their powers in drafting a *new Constitution*, that their goal should only have been to *propose amendments to the Articles of Confederation which the well being of the Union might have required*. Instead of limiting themselves to this task, they have consolidated the states, seized all power from the legislative assemblies, authorized the establishment of an army and perhaps of an arbitrary taxation.

Pennsylvania, sir, is the only state which suffered some jolts by the publication of the new Constitution. The parties which have existed there for such a long time seem to take on a new vigor. The people there have always been against the establishment of a high chamber and a governor capable of balancing the excessive preponderance of the legislative Assembly. The questions which necessarily result from the scrutiny of the new government revive old quarrels on the balance of the three branches of administration.

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