

George Washington to Sir Edward Newenham, Mount Vernon, 29 August 1788 (excerpt)

... I hope the United States of America will be able to keep disengaged from the labyrinth of European politics & Wars; and that before long they will, by the adoption of a good national government, have become respectable in the eyes of the world so that none of the Maritime Powers, especially none of those who hold possessions in the New World or the West Indies shall presume to treat them with insult or contempt.—It should be the policy of United America to administer to their wants, without being engaged in their quarrels.—And it is not in the ability of the proudest and most potent people on earth to prevent us from becoming a great, a respectable & a commercial Nation, if we shall continue United & faithful to ourselves.—

Your sollicitude that an efficient and good government may be established in this Country, in order that it may enjoy felicity at home and respectability abroad, serves only to confirm me in the opinion I have always entertained of your disinterested & ardent friendship for this Land of freedom.—It is true, that, for the want of a proper Confœderation, we have not yet been in a situation fully to enjoy those blessings which God & Nature seemed to have intended for us.—But I begin to look forward, with a kind of political faith, to scenes of National happiness, which have not heretofore been offered for the fruition of the most favoured Nations.—The natural, political, and moral circumstances of our nascent empire justify the anticipation.—We have an almost unbounded territory whose natural advantages for agriculture & commerce equal those of any on the globe.—In a civil point of view we have the unequalled privilege of choosing our own political Institutions and of improving upon the experience of Mankind in the formation of a confederated government, where due energy will not be incompatible with the unalienable rights of freemen.—<To complete the picture, I may observe,> that the information & morals of our Citizens appear to be peculiarly favourable for the introduction of such a plan of government as I have just now described.

Although there were some few things in the Constitution recommended by the Fœderal Convention to the determination of the People, which did not fully accord with my wishes; yet, having taken every circumstance seriously into consideration, I was convinced it approached nearer to perfection than any government hitherto instituted among men.—I was also convinced, that nothing but a genuine spirit of amity & accomodation could have induced the members to make those mutual concessions & to sacrifice (at the shrine of enlightened liberty) those local prejudices, which seemed to oppose an insurmountable barrier, to prevent them from harmonising in any system whatsoever.—

But so it has happened by the good pleasure of Providence, and the same happy disposition has been diffused and fostered among the people at large.—You will permit me to say, that a greater Drama is now acting on this Theatre than has heretofore been brought on the American Stage, or any other in the world.—We exhibit at present the novel & astonishing Spectacle of a whole People deliberating calmly on what form of

government will be most conducive to their happiness; and deciding with an unexpected degree of unanimity in favour of a system which they conceive calculated to answer the purpose.

It is only necessary to add for your satisfaction, that, as all the States, which have yet acted and which are ten in number, have adopted the proposed Constitution; and as the concurrence of nine States was sufficient to carry it into effect in the first insta. it is expected the government will be in complete organization & execution before the commencement of the ensuing year....

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