

Pierce Butler to Weeden Butler, Mary-Ville, 5 May 1788 (excerpt)

I am free to confess, that after all Our Endeavours, our System is little better than matter of Experiment; and that much must depend on the Morals and manners of the People at large—It is a large and wide Extended Empire, let then the System be ever so perfect, good Order and Obedience must greatly depend on the Patriotism of the Citizen—I am not insensible that the Constitution We have Ventured to recommend to the States has its faults; but the Circumstances under which It was framed are some alleviation of them—It is probable there were Abilities in the Convention to bring forward a more perfect System of Government for a Country better adapted to the reception of it than America ever can be—Was America, or rather the States, more Compact It is possible Our System woud have been more perfect...We were therefore, in prudence, obliged to Accommodate Ourselves to Interests, not only opposite, but, in some measure as You observe, Clashing... of Interests. . . .

Thus Circumstanced We were obliged to Accommodate Ourselves to the Interests of the Whole; And Our System shoud be Considered as the result of a Spirit of Accommodation, And not as the most perfect System, that under other Circumstances, coud be devised by the Convention—When You consider my Dear Sir, the Great Extent of Territory, the Various Climates & products, the differing manners and, as I before observed, the Contending Commercial Interests, You will agree with me, that it required a pretty General Spirit of Accommodation in the Members of Convention to bring forward such a system as woud be agreed to and approved of by all—In this light then are You to View the product of Our Joint Endeavours. . . .

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-03-17-02-0075> [accessed 31 Aug 2012]

Original source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XVII: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 5