James Madison to Alexander Hamilton, 20 July 1788

My Dear Sir N. York Sunday Evening [20 July 1788]

Yours of yesterday is this instant come to hand & I have but a few minutes to answer it. I am sorry that your situation obliges you to listen to propositions of the nature you describe. My opinion is that a reservation of a right to withdraw if amendments be not decided on under the form of the Constitution within a certain time, is a conditional ratification, that it does not make N. York a member of the New Union, and consequently that she could not be received on that plan. Compacts must be reciprocal, this principle would not in such a case be preserved. The Constitution requires an adoption in toto, and for ever. It has been so adopted by the other States. An adoption for a limited time would be as defective as an adoption of some of the articles only. In short any condition whatever must viciate the ratification. What the New Congress by virtue of the power to admit new States, may be able & disposed to do in such case, I do not enquire as I suppose that is not the material point at present. I have not a moment to add more than my fervent wishes for your success & happiness

JS. Madison

This idea of reserving right to withdraw was started at Richmd. & considered as a conditional ratification which was itself considered as worse than a rejection.

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