Luther Martin: Genuine Information IX Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 29 January 1788 (excerpt)

Mr. MARTIN'S *Information to the House of Assembly, continued.*

The *second article*, relates to the executive—his mode of election—his powers—and the length of time he should continue in office.

On these subjects, there was a great diversity of sentiment—Many of the members were desirous that the president should be elected for seven years, and not to be eligible a second time—others proposed that he should not be absolutely ineligible, but that he should not be capable of being chosen a second time, until the expiration of a certain number of years—The supporter of the above propositions, went upon the idea that the best security for liberty was a limited duration and a rotation of office in the chief executive department.

There was a party who attempted to have the president appointed during good behaviour, without any limitation as to time, and not being able to succeed in that attempt, they then endeavoured to have him re-eligible without any restraint.—It was objected that the choice of a president to continue in office during good behaviour, would be at once rendering our system an elective monarchy—and, that if the president was to be re-eligible without any interval of disqualification, it would amount nearly to the same thing, since with the powers that the president is to enjoy, and the interest and influence with which they will be attended, he will be almost absolutely certain of being re-elected from time to time, as long as he lives—As the propositions were reported by the committee of the whole house, the president was to be chosen for seven years, and not to be eligible at any time after—In the same manner the proposition was agreed to in convention, and so was it reported by the committee of detail, although a variety of attempts were made to alter that part of the system by those who were of a contrary opinion, in which they repeatedly failed; but, Sir, by never losing sight of their object, and choosing a proper time for their purpose, they succeeded at length in obtaining the alteration, which was not made until within the last twelve days before the convention adjourned.

As the propositions were agreed to by the committee of the whole house, the president was to be appointed by the national legislature, and as it was reported by the committee of detail, the choice was to be made by ballot in such a manner, that the States should have an equal voice in the appointment of this officer, as they, of right, ought to have; but those who wished as far as possible to establish a *national* instead of a *federal* government, made repeated attempts to have the president chosen by the people at large; on this the sense of the convention was taken, I think not less than three times while I was there, and as often rejected; but within the last fortnight of

their session, they obtained the alteration in the manner it now stands, by which the large States have a very undue influence in the appointment of the president.—There is no case where the States will have an equal voice in the appointment of the president, except where two persons shall have each an equal number of votes, and those a majority of the whole number of electors, a case very unlikely to happen, or where no person has a majority of the votes; in these instances the house of representatives are to choose by ballot, each State having an equal voice, but they are confined in the last instance to the five who have the greatest number of votes, which gives the largest States a very unequal chance of having the president chose under their nomination.

As to the vice-president, that great officer of government, who is in case of death, resignation, removal or inability of the president, to supply his place, and be vested with his powers, and who is officially to be the president of the senate, there is no provision by which a majority of the voices of the electors are necessary for his appointment, but after it is decided who is chosen president, that person who has the next greatest number of votes of the electors, is declared to be legally elected to the vice-presidency, so that by this system it is very possible, and not improbable, that he may be appointed by the electors of a *single large State*; and a very undue influence in the senate is given to that State of which the vice-president, is a citizen, since in every question where the senate is divided that State will have two votes, the president having on those occasions a casting voice.—Every part of the system which relates to the vice-president, as well as the present mode of electing the president, was introduced and agreed upon after I left Philadelphia.

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