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James Madison to Alexander Hamilton New York, 20 July 1788

MY DEAR SIR

N. YORK Sunday Evening

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.

CITE AS: Charles F. Hobson, Robert A. Rutland et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison* (Charlottesville, Va., University of Virginia Press, 1977), XI, 189.