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John Lamb to Richard Henry Lee New York, 18 May 1788

The Importance of the Subject upon which we address you, we trust will be a sufficient Apology for the Liberty we take.

The System of Government proposed by the late Convention to the respective States for their Adoption, involves in it Questions and Consequences in the highest Degree interesting to the People of these States.

While we see, in common with our Brethren of the other States, the Necessity of making Alterations in the present existing federal Government, we cannot but apprehend that the one proposed in its Room contains in it Principles dangerous to public Liberty and Safety.

It would far exceed the Bounds of a Letter to detail to you our Objections to the proposed Constitution. And it is the less necessary that we should do it, as they are well stated in a Publication, which we take the Liberty of transmitting you in a series of Letters from the Federal Farmer to the Republican. We renounce all Ideas of local Objections and confine ourselves to such only as affect the Cause of general Liberty, and are drawn from those genuine Republican Principles and Maxims, which we consider as the Glory of our Country, and which gave rise to the late glorious Revolution and supported the Patriots of America in supporting it.

Impressed with these Sentiments we hold it a Duty we owe our Country our Posterity and the Rights of Mankind to use our best Endeavours to procure Amendments to the System previous to its Adoption—

To accomplish this desirable Event it is of Importance that those States who have not yet acceded to the Plan should open a Correspondence, and maintain a Communication—That they should understand one another on the Subject and unite in the Amendments they propose—

With this View we address you on the Subject and request a free Correspondence may be opened between such Gentlemen in your State as are of Opinion with us on the Subject of Amendments—We request your Opinion on the Matter and that you would state such Amendments as you judge necessary to be made.

We think it would conduce very much to promote Union and prevent Discord and an Hostile Disposition among the States, if a Correspondence could be brought about between the Conventions of your State, New Hampshire and this, who we presume will be in Session at the same time—We have the highest Hopes that such a Measure would produce the happiest Effects—We shall write to New Hampshire and propose it and wish your Convention may be inclined to agree to it—We have every Reason to believe it will be agreeably to ours.—

It is not yet declared who are the Members elected for our Convention. The Ballots are to be counted the last Teusday in this Month¹—But by the best Information received from the different Counties we have not a Doubt of there being a decided Majority returned who will be opposed to the Constitution in its present Form. A number of the leading and influential Characters who will compose the Opposition in our Convention are associated with us. We are anxious to form a Union with our Friends in the other States, and to manifest to the Continent and to the World, that our Opposition to this Constitution does not arise from an Impatience under the Restraint of good Government from local or State Attachments, from interested Motives or Party Prejudice—but from the purer Sentiments of the Love of Liberty, an Attachment to Republican Principles and an Adherence to those Ideas which prevailed at the Commencement of the late Revolution, and which animated the most illustrious Patriots to undertake and persevere in the glorious but arduous Contest.²

In behalf of the federal republican Committee I have the honour to be Sir, Your most obedt. servant

John Lamb
Chairman

PS. We shall write to North & South Carolina, on the general Subject of this Letter, but as thire Conventions will not be in Session at the time that yours, New Hampshire & ours will be, we cannot propose a correspondence between them.—

1. The New York elections for state convention delegates took place between 29 April and 3 May.

2. Alexander Hamilton had a different view of the opposition in New York: “The language of the Antifœderalists is that if all the other states adopt, New York ought still to hold out—I have the most direct intelligence, but in a manner, which forbids a public use being made of it, that Clinton has in several conversations declared his opinion of the *inutility* of the UNION. Tis an unhappy reflection, that the friends to it should by quarrelling for straws among themselves promote the designs of its adversaries.”

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