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Aedanus Burke to John Lamb
Charleston, S.C., 23 June 1788

Your favour of the 19th. of May I received the 18th. of June inst. That it came not to hand sooner, I cannot account for; however, it came too late; for our Convention had acceded to the new Constitution on the 24th. of May by a Majority of The minority consisting of 73.

It is now unnecessary perhaps to state to you the different causes, whereby the new Plan has been carried in South Carolina, notwithstanding ⅘ of the people do, from their Souls detest it. I am convinced, from my Knowledge of the Country, that I am rather under, than over, that proportion. In the first place, we in the Opposition, had not, previous to our Meeting, either wrote, or spoke, hardly a word against it, nor took any one step in the matter. We had no principle of concert or union, while its friends and abettors left no expedient untried to push it forward. All the rich, leading men, along the seacoast, and rice settlements; with few exceptions, Lawyers, P[h]ysicians and Divines, the merchants, mechanicks, the Populace, and mob of Charleston. I think it worthy of Observation that not a single instance in So. Carolina of a Man formerly a Tory, or British adherent, who is not loud and zealous for the new Constitution.[1] From the British Consul (who is the most violent Man I know for it) [George Miller] down to the British Scavenger, all are boisterious to drive it down. Add to this, the whole weight and influence of the *Press* was in that Scale. Not a printing press, in Carolina, out of the City. The printers are, in general, British journeymen, or poor Citizens who are afraid to offend the great men, or Merchants, who could work their ruin. Thus, with us, the press is in the hands of a junto, and the Printers, with most servile insolence discouraged Opposition, and pushed forward publications in its favour; for no one wrote against it.

But the principle cause was holding the Convention in the City, where there are not fifty Inhabitants who are not friendly to it. The Merchants and leading Men kept open houses for the back and low country Members during the whole time the Convention sat. The sixth day after we sat, despatches arrived, bringing an account that Maryland had acceded to the Scheme.[2] This was a severe blow to us; for next day, one of our best speakers in the Opposition, Doctor Fousseaux, gave notice he would quit that ground, as Maryland had acceded to it. Upon which we were every day afterwards losing ground & numbers going over to the Enemy, on an idea that further Opposition was useless. But notwithstanding these Misfortunes, the few of us who spoke, General Sumpter, Mr. John Bowman, a gentleman of fortune and fine talents, of the low-country; myself and a few of the back country men, found it necessary, in supporting the Opposition, to

exert the greater spirit and resolution, as our difficulties increased. Our Minority is a respectable one, and I can with great truth assure you, that it represents by far a greater number of Citizens than the Majority—The minority are chiefly from the back country where the Strength and numbers of our republick lie—And although the Vote of the Convention has carried it, that has not changed the opinion of the great body of people respecting its evil tendency. In the interiour Country, all is disgust, sorrow, and vindictive reproaches against the System, and those who voted for it. It is true, the ratification of it was solemnized in our City, with splended procession and shew. We hear from the back Country, however That in some places the people had a Coffin painted black, which, borne in funeral procession, was solemnly buried, as an emblem of the dissolution and interment of publick Liberty. You may rely upon it if a fair Opportunity offers itself to our back Country men they will join heart and hand to bring Ruin on the new Plan unless it be materially altered. They declare so publickly: They feel that they are the very men, who, as mere Militia, half-armed and half-clothed have fought and defeated the British regulars in sundry encounters—They think that after having disputed and gained the Laurel under the banners of Liberty, now, that they are likely to be robbed both of the honour and the fruits of it, by a Revolution purposely contrived for it. I know some able Men among us, or such as are thought so, affect to despise the general Opinion of the Multitude: For my own part I think that that Government rests on a very sandy foundation, the Subjects whereof are convinced that it is a bad one. Time alone will convince us.

This is the first time that I ever put pen to paper on the subject, (to *another*) and it is not for want of inclination to do it. Nobody views this matter from the point of light and view in which I see it; or if any one did, he must be crazy, if he told his mind. The true, open, rising ground, no one has dared to take, or will dare to do it, 'till the business is all over. If you live two or three years, you will find the World will ascribe to the right Author, this whole affair, and put the saddle on the right Horse, as we say. I find myself approaching too near to forbidden ground, and must desist. I am sorry it hath been my Lot not to be able to serve the Repub. on the present Business, Virginia and New York adopting it (and of which I have no doubt) they will proceed to put it into Motion, and then you, and I, and all of us, will be obliged to take it, as we take our Wives, "for better, for worse." I have only one remark to make—Should any event turn up with you, that would require to be known to our republican Friends here, only make us acquainted with it. Should either Virginia or New York State reject it, the system will fall to pieces, tho other nine States may agree to it, and in such an Event, or in any other that may give us an occasion to serve the Repub. your communication will be duly attended to by me. I forgot to mention, that Mr Lowndes, would not serve in the Convention, declining to take his Seat; out of disgust to some leading men in the parish that sent him, he abandoned a Cause, which, I believe, he thought a just one.

Mr. John Bowman is capable of serving any Cause he espouses. Col. Thomas Taylor of the Congarees—Col Richard and Wade Hampton.—These three are from the back Country; their gallantry in the War, their Property, and some talents, give them great influence in that part of the Country.

1. Apparently, Burke was having second thoughts about his earlier conciliatory attitude toward Loyalists. In a 1783 pamphlet, using the pseudonym "Cassius," Burke had criticized the harsh treatment of Loyalists.

2. The South Carolina Convention convened in Charleston on 12 May 1788. Four days later, the Charleston *City Gazette* reported that Maryland had ratified; several days later this news was verified.

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