Spurious Luther Martin: Address No. V Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 10 April 1788

The identity of the author of this spurious address has not been determined, but it was apparently someone who, like the Maryland "Landholder," knew Martin's role in the Constitutional Convention.

To the Editor of the Federal Gazette.

Sir, I observe, that you have republished the Landholder, No. X. against me. Your publishing my fifth Number to the Citizens of Maryland, will be a proof of your impartiality, and will much oblige your humble servant, L —— R M —— N.

Baltimore, 5th April 1788.

NUMBER V.

To the Citizens of Maryland.

To you, my fellow-citizens, I beg leave to address a few thoughts more upon that *villainous system of tyranny*, fals[e]ly called *a federal constitution*, formed by a band of conspiring traitors, in a secret conclave at Philadelphia last summer.

I, my fellow citizens, I was *the only honest man* in that *democratic* (not *aristocratic*) *junto*, for a considerable time. I was the only man who, with becoming firmness, decidedly opposed every measure of that body; because I knew them, *every man*, to be aspiring tyrants. Did "Mr. WASHINGTON or Mr. FRANKLIN" act thus nobly? No truly: they approved of several of the propositions of the conspiring committee; at least they tacitly acquiesced in some of their measures, and had not spirit nor patriotism enough to bellow out against all their doings whether right or wrong, as I did: nay more, they finally took an active part in the plot, and assisted in forming this damnable constitution.

Perhaps it may be asked, why I uniformly opposed every step taken by the convention? I answer briefly—*they were ALL wrong*. Does any one ask, Is it not more likely, that they were right and you wrong? Impossible! for I applied myself with all my might to the study of government from the first day I took my seat in convention, which was on Saturday, I forget the hour.[1] The next day (being Sunday, which still is the next day after Saturday, you know) notwithstanding my "religious scruples," I entirely spent in examining their journals. I then studied the science of government, beginning with the first principles, for the space of "*THIRTY days*." Consider this, my fellow-citizens, *THIRTY days* devoted to the study of government! with all the "histories" on politics both ancient and modern, to assist me; and a private tutor, the most intelligent that Philadelphia could afford, to throw light upon the most difficult parts of that abstruse science.

Having thus attained a superlative knowledge of government, I boldly ventured to open upon the members of convention, and not only proved them *aspiring traitors*, but also ignorant ones: that they were not polite enough to listen attentively to me (as that babbling rascal the Landholder has divulged) was not my fault; it must be attributed to their ill-breeding, and their aversion to the important doctrines I communicated to them, and which they had not sufficient understanding to comprehend.

But to come to the point—A greater part of the members were for proportioning the number of representatives in Congress, to the number of taxable inhabitants in the respective states. This met with my decided opposition. I did not wish that the smaller states (especially Rhode Island, where I have many friends) should be deprived of their equal suffrage in the federal government, *if we must have one*: besides, upon their plan, which was unfortunately carried by a large majority, the state of Maryland is to send to the federal house of representatives more than *one thirteenth*, which should be her part in that body; for the whole number of representatives is to be *sixty five*; of these Maryland is to send *six*, when her number ought to be no more than *five*. This kind of representation I opposed upon the principles of common honesty; for if Maryland be thus suffered to have an undue influence in the federal body, she may possibly exert it to the prejudice of the worthy little state of Rhode Island, and to her own aggrandisement.

But a still greater cause for my uniform opposition was, the mode by which the president and federal delegates are to be elected—not by the legislatures of the different states, as heretofore, but by the *mob*, the *rabble*, the *scum of the earth*, in short, to give them their worst name, by the *common people*. What do the *common herd* of mortals know of any thing, especially of government? What right have they to chuse legislators, &c. in all probability they will elect to this trust some low rascals, ignorant as themselves. For this reason, I say, I object to the new government; for what a mortifying thought would it be to *me*, or to any other *gentleman*, to be sent to congress with one, nay perhaps two or three such fellows for my colleagues! Oh ye powers! I sicken at the thought of serving in congress with a parcel of low bred ruffian farmers!

Suffer me, my fellow citizens, (I mean the better sort, for I would scorn to address the rabble) suffer me, I say, to mention another great cause of my opposition to this constitution:—The framers of it have inserted a clause prohibiting paper-money emissions, and legal tenders, in any of the states; now every one of you must know, that without these the courts of justice, and that valuable class of citizens called *lawyers*, would be deprived of more than two thirds of their employment; consequently many of those worthy gentlemen would be obliged to seek their bread in a foreign land. Should this be the case what is to become of the United States? Is it not well known that WE are the best arbitrators for settling any disputes which may arise between man and man? And are not WE the brightest ornaments of every state in the union? Pardon me if I request you for a moment to turn your eyes to *myself and to another worthy character* in your state, who were not concerned in the late rebellion against Great Britain; but on the present occasion we would not hesitate to sacrifice our *lives* (pardon the mistake, I mean WIVES) to procure the rejection of this constitution, which I look upon as little better than a Pandora's box to our profession. I trust it is unnecessary to mention the name of C—*e*;[2] you are well acquainted with his important services. Had *we* the power of deciding upon the federal constitution, which *we*, and not the *common people*, should certainly have, *we* would soon give it the *go by* in this state. This brings me to my concluding objection.

The mode which the convention have pointed out for the ratification of this constitution by *the people*, *the very common people too*, is intolerable. What! do they think that L—r M—n will live under a constitution the merits of which are to be determined by the *boors*, the *peasants*, the *farmers*, the *millers*, the very *off-scourings* of Maryland! Whoever thinks so is egregriously mistaken. I would inform such, that there is an asylum for me in Rhode Island, where the worthy friends to *legal tenders* long to receive me with open arms;[3] and thither I shall certainly repair so soon as this constitution shall have been adopted by the state of Maryland. Nor is this an empty threat; for by the profits of my Att—y-G—lship I swear, that I will put it in execution, and, in so doing, deprive you of a valuable officer. Attend to my declaration, ye stalls of asses! ye rabble of Maryland! reject this constitution immediately, unless you wish to lose me for ever.

In my next number I shall let you see something of my importance: at present it may suffice to remind you, that notwithstanding I "exhausted the politeness of the convention," and met with nothing but silent contempt from that body, in answer to all my long-winded speeches; yet I was honoured with the *intimate friendship* of Mr. Mason, Mr. Gerry, and some other gentlemen, and held private meetings with them, as I mentioned before in my first number. And don't you all remember my vindication of Mr. Gerry's character, which would have been ruined but for me? These circumstances prove, beyond a doubt, that I am held in great esteem, as a politician, a lawyer, (I was going to say, a *man of honour*, and *a gentleman*; but curse on such empty names, I heartily despise them) and a *gentle* man.

L —— R M —— N.

Baltimore, 5th April 1788.

P. S. It may seem a little singular, that my objections to this constitution are widely different from those of every other man who has written on the subject; and that, when others are contending for greater powers to be lodged with the people, I am for curtailing those already granted them, viz. the election of the president and house of representatives; and the ratification or rejection of the proposed constitution. The truth is, that I wish to be singular; therefore while some are stickling for that *vile democracy* which they so blindly admire, I should wish to see an *aristocracy*, similar to that of Venice, established in the United States. This would effectually exclude the base born rabble from a share in the government—stupid fellows who, as I already told you in my fourth number, are not an atom better than the nation of frogs, in the fable.

Oh my fellow-citizens! "I do not wish that you should beat your plow shares into swords, nor your pruning hooks into spears; nor do I ask you to perplex your minds in reasoning upon this new constitution: to give it your simple negative, to pronounce the single monosyllable NO, is all I ask of you." Is this an unreasonable request? No surely; you have a right to obey the command of your Att—y G—l in this trifling instance.

1. Luther Martin first attended the Constitutional Convention on Saturday, 9 June.

2. Samuel Chase, Maryland's leading opponent of the Constitution and a supporter of conditional amendments, voted against ratification in the Maryland Convention on 26 April.

3. Several Maryland Antifederalist leaders, including Martin and Samuel Chase, advocated the emission of paper money and other measures to assist debtors.

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