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Adjournment of the New Hampshire Convention

John Sullivan to Jeremy Belknap Durham, N.H., 26 February 1788

My Dear Friend,

The Inclosed being altogether of a private Nature I now proceed to give you some account of our political proceedings in this state! The Convention when assembled to the amount of one hundred stood Thus Seventy against & thirty for the New Constitution you will perhaps wonder how it happened that so Large a majority was against it & so few in favor—but you know sir that few enter at the Strait Gate while great Numbers pursue a more Dangerous Road [Matthew 7:13–14]. But the minority was made up of men that had Studied the Constitution Acted their own Judgment & felt Themselves possessed of independent minds & Estates the majority had some good men that were short Sighted some few who longed for the onions of Egypt [Numbers 11:5] many who were Distressed & in Debt; Numbers who conceived that This System would compel men to be honest against both their Inclination & their Interest some who were blinded through excess of zeal for the Cause of Religion and others who by putting on the masque of sanctity thought to win proselites—Thus aranged we entered the Field of Action: And you cannot be surprized if I tell you that all the objections made against the new plan & published in your State were handed out here by rote with such amendments, alterations, Embellishments and Disfigurements as Ingenuity folly obstinacy & false piety could Suggest—

however the good Cause gained Ground & when we adjourned I think that a majority was in favor but as about thirty who were bound by Instructions to vote against the plan had through the preaching of Doctor [Samuel] Langdon, & others become Real Converts it was thought best to have an adjournment that they might go home & obtain Liberty to Act their own Judgment and I Doubt not but, it will then be received by a very Large majority; but sir lest you should conceive that we have no talent at Invention in this state and that all our objections were borrowed from Massachusetts I will now give you some Specimens of New Hampshire Ingenuity a pious Deacon [Matthias Stone] liked the plan or rather would have liked it if it afforded any Security of our having the holy Scriptures continued to us in our mother Tongue. The want of a religeous test was urged here as well as with you but even if that was given up in all other cases The President at Least ought to be compelled to submit to it for otherwise says one “a Turk, a Jew, a Roman Catholic and what is worse than all a universalist may be president of the united States.” If time would permit I could give you many other Specimens of original genius in the members of our Convention but I hope the above will Suffice I beg you to present my Compliments to your Lady and Family and that you will believe me to be very respectfully sir

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