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Commentaries on the Referendum

Antoine de la Forest to Comte de la Luzerne New York, 15 April 1788 (excerpt)

. . . The State of Rhode Island itself, in spite of its insignificance and the scorn in which the party that has directed affairs there for three years is held, serves to encourage, by its conduct, the obstinacy of the opposition in these states. Its legislature, which steadfastly refused to convene a convention of the people, was no longer able to avoid acknowledging the proposed constitution, and has referred it for consideration by each Town. It well knew that it would be easier to make this plan fail there than in a large assembly where discussion enlightens the mind and where the arguments of *antifederalists* cannot hold out against those of their adversaries; some of these Towns have in effect voted against the new Government. The others have [met?] in order to examine it, have protested against [the] resolution of the legislature, and have demanded the convocation of a convention like the other States. The legislature has rejected this [demand?] and, [in] what is the height of bad faith, informed Congress of the negative vote of the ill-disposed Towns as the decision of the entire State. It is however established that there are almost 7000 votes in [the state?] and that the negative votes amounted to only 2500. *Federalists* can expect nothing more from Rhode [Island], and there is reason to believe that it will yield only to the unanimity of its sister States. . . .

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