

An Assembly of Demigods

John Lansing, Jr.

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, August 13, 1782

Lansing is a good young fellow and a good practitioner of the law, but his friends mistook his talents when they made him a statesman. He thinks two pence an ounce upon plate a *monstrous tax*. The county of Albany is not of my opinion concerning him.

William Pierce: Sketches of Members of the Constitutional Convention

Mr. Lansing is a practising Attorney at Albany, and Mayor of that corporation.—He has a hisitation in his speech, that will prevent his being an Orator of any eminence;—his legal knowledge I am told is not extensive, nor his education a good one. He is however a Man of good sense, plain in his manners, and sincere in his friendships. He is about 32 Years of age.

Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Poughkeepsie, New York Daily Advertiser, June 28, 1788

[In the New York ratifying convention, Lansing]. . . was miserable, wretched and deformed in every public feature.

Extract of a Letter from a Correspondent, Maryland Journal, September 12, 1788

I have, at last, seen what Mr. Lansing, of New-York government, calls his amendments to the constitution.

A person of slender talents and narrow capacity, is generally full of himself. Mr. Lansing has launched into an ocean, with which he was unacquainted, without quadrant or compass; and has adopted a latitude and variation, so the consequence of which he seems to be an entire stranger. . . .

It appears, upon the whole, that Mr. Lansing might have improved himself by staying a month or six weeks longer in the Federal Convention, which he left so abruptly.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, June 6, 1802

Our new Chancellor is attentive and honest, but his mind is narrow and piddling; and he is utterly destitute of those liberal and comprehensive views, which are suited to the Court over which he presides.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, Albany, April 15, 1807

The truth is that Clinton originally debauched Lansing, and drew him when he was a warm partisan from the party he was attached to and put him in the opposite ranks. Ever since which Clinton has promised him and given him a currency to office & importance, which his slender abilities never entitled him to.