

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 29 May 1788 (excerpt)

The adoption of the new Constitution in South Carolina begins to become a probability, despite the very strong opposition of the interior districts. These districts are populated by a large number of Scots and Germans, all of them disposed to an unrestricted liberty, the former as a result of Presbyterianism, the latter because they suffered the disadvantages of an absolute Government in their native country. The Convention of that State, which is currently assembled, has just rejected by a large majority the motion made by Antifederalists to adjourn until the 20th of next October under the pretext that the inhabitants of the Backcountry had not had time to read and examine the new Constitution and that through ignorance they had given instructions to oppose it. The debtors, who form at least four-fifths of the population of Carolina, fear that a more powerful Government would prevent them from printing paper money and from taking other measures equally prejudicial to their creditors. It is nevertheless hoped that this State will be the eighth column that will support the new federal edifice.

In North Carolina the Elections have been accompanied with more violence than in any other State; several Federalists have been assaulted with hatchet blows, and they have almost deserved this punishment because of the vehemence with which they had tried to coerce the voters who seemed to them to be opposed.

The names of Members of the Convention for the City of Newyork were just reported and show that at least in this City the Federalists are the strongest. The interior districts will be able to put up a larger number of men in opposition to them, but talents, riches, and reputation are on the side of Federalism. In spite of these advantages the partisans of the new Government acknowledge that they are the minority in this State and that they will be left with no other expedient than to draw out the deliberations until the moment when the sentiment of Virginia is known, which, if it is favorable, could cause the State of Newyork to be afraid of remaining excluded from the confederation along with Rhodeisland, which is generally despised.

Since the publication of the Act of the English Parliament concerning the Commerce of the British Colonies with the United States, it is hoped, My Lord, that Virginia and the other States that seemed opposed to the new Constitution will feel the necessity of adopting it in order to plan the means to be avenged for the harshness with which they are treated in this act. It could not have arrived here at a more favorable time; it indicates on the one hand the small value that England places on either the friendship or the hatred of the United States and the great importance of the establishment of a more respectable and more vigorous Government; on the other hand, it makes a striking contrast with the generosity that inspired the arrêt of 29 December, which had already appeared unofficially in the newspapers and which has since been published by order of Congress. Americans are indignant to see that after all the fine hopes that Mr. J. Adams had given concerning the conclusion of a favorable treaty of commerce, this Minister returns here with an act that makes permanent the regulations that had previously been made annually to exclude the flag of the United States from trading in the West Indies and to permit them only the exportation of salt from the Turks Islands under the most humiliating conditions. To make this Act even more odious, it was accompanied by an Ordinance from Lord Dorchester, Governor of Canada, which, in spite of encouragements it gives to the importation of all the products of the interior of the United States, contains the most severe prohibitions concerning commerce in furs, a commerce which, by the surrender of

posts in conformity with the Treaty of Peace, ought to have belonged almost exclusively to these States and which is forbidden to them by motives that England could easily justify but that Americans are hardly disposed to concede.

Great Britain, My Lord, in this respect follows a policy that essentially keeps the situation advantageous to it. Without making any sacrifice, without seeking the friendship of a people deprived of principles, of system, of Government, it sees itself in possession of almost all its active and passive Commerce, it reserves for itself the right to take from the Americans all that is indispensable to its Colonies and to carry to them all the commodities that it can do without; not content to dictate to the Atlantic States, it extends its influence into the interior by forcing the shipping of all the products of the territories bordering on Canada on the St. Lawrence River and by paying for them in merchandise manufactured in England. It can be said that England lost by the Revolution only the right to appoint Governors, but that the United States are still its fertile and profitable Colonies. This state of things will certainly change if the new Government is established, but the more Great Britain has confined the Americans, the more compensations it will be able to offer when it becomes a question of buying favors. These considerations greatly influence the minds of those who are at the head of the different conventions, and they are perhaps as strong as rich men's fears of losing their property due to the greed and bad faith of the populace. Be that as it may, My Lord, one can still doubt the efficacy of this new Government with respect to domestic administration, although it ought to inspire more confidence and consideration in foreign powers. Power is rarely procured by unanimous consent; it is more often due to fortunate circumstances, to genius, to an appropriately struck blow....

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