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## Luther Martin: To the Printer *Maryland Journal*, 18 January 1788<sup>1</sup>

MR. WILLIAM GODDARD:

SIR, As the Publication under the Signature of the CONNECTICUT LANDHOLDER, is circulating remote from the place of Mr. *Gerry's* residence, and is calculated not only to injure that honourable gentleman in his private character, but also to weaken the effect of his opposition to the government proposed by the late convention, and thereby promote the adoption of a system, which I consider destructive of the rights and liberties of the respective states, and of their citizens; I beg leave, through the channel of your Paper, to declare to the Public, that from the time I took my seat in convention, which was early in June, until the fourth day of September, when I left *Philadelphia*, I am satisfied I was not ten minutes absent from convention while sitting (excepting only five days in the beginning of August, immediately after the committee of detail had reported, during which but little business was done.) That during my attendance, I never heard Mr. *Gerry*, or any other member, introduce a proposition for the redemption of continental money according to its nominal, or any other value, nor did I ever hear that such a proposition had been offered to consideration, or had been thought of. I was intimate with Mr. *Gerry*, and never heard him express in private conversation, or otherwise, a wish for the redemption of continental money, or assign the want of such a provision as a defect—Nor did I ever hear in convention, or any where else, such a motive of conduct attributed to Mr. *Gerry*.

I also declare to the Public, that a considerable time before I left the convention, Mr. *Gerry's* opposition to the system was warm and decided—that in a particular manner he strenuously opposed that provision by which the *power* and *authority* over the *militia* is *taken away* from the *states* and *given* to the *general government*—that in the debate he declared, if that measure was adopted, it would be the most convincing proof that the destruction of the *state governments*, and the *introduction* of a *King* was *designed*, and that no declarations to the contrary *ought* to be *credited*, since it was giving the states the last *coup de grace*, by taking from them the *only* means of *self-preservation*.<sup>2</sup>

The conduct of the advocates and framers of this system, towards the *thirteen states*, in pretending it was designed for their advantage, and gradually obtaining power after power to the general government, which could not but end in *their* slavery, he compared to the conduct of a number of *jockeys*, who had thirteen *young colts* to break—they begin with the appearance of kindness, giving them a lock of hay, or a handful of oats, and stroking them while they eat, until being rendered sufficiently gentle, they suffer a halter to be put round their necks—obtaining a further degree of their confidence, the jockeys slip, a curb bridle on their heads, and the bit into

their mouths, after which the saddle follows of course, and well booted and spurred, with good whips in their hands, they mount and ride them at their pleasure, and although they may kick and flounce a little at first, not being able to get clear of their *riders*, they soon become as *tame* and *passive* as their *masters* could wish them.

In the course of *public* debate in the convention, Mr. *Gerry* applied to the system of government, as then under discussion, the words of *Pope* with respect to *vice*, “that it was a monster of such horrid mien, as to be hated need but to be seen.” And some time before I left *Philadelphia*, he in the same public manner, declared in convention, that he should consider himself a traitor to his country, if he did not oppose the system *there*, and also when he left the convention.

These, Sir, *are facts* which I do not fear being contradicted by any *member* of the convention, and will, I apprehend, satisfactorily shew that Mr. *Gerry’s* opposition proceeded from a conviction in his own mind, that the government, if adopted, would *terminate* in the *destruction* of the *states*, and in the *introduction* of a *kingly* government.

*Baltimore, January 13, 1788.*

1. Martin’s letter answers “Landholder” VIII, an attack upon Elbridge Gerry.

2. In opposing the central government’s power over the state militia, Gerry said: “Let us at once destroy the State Govts have an Executive for life or hereditary, and a proper Senate, and then there would be some consistency in giving full powers to the Genl Govt. but as the States are not to be abolished, he wondered at the attempts that were made to give powers inconsistent with their existence. He warned the Convention agst pushing the experiment too far. Some people will support a plan of vigorous Government at every risk. Others of a more democratic cast will oppose it with equal determination. And a Civil war may be produced by the conflict.”

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XV: Commentaries on the Constitution, Public and Private [3] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1984), 414–16.