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Assessments of Individual Delegates > Alexander Hamilton

John Lansing, Jr., to Abraham Yates, Jr. Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 28 June 1788

The Convention have just adjourned—in the Course of the Debates Mr. Hamilton mentioned his persuasion that the State Governments ought to be & were a necessary part of the System—that both were essential in its operations and that no Ideas hostile to the Existence of the State Governments could be possibly harboured by the general Government.

In answering his Observations I took Occasion to observe—that no Opinion appeared more generally received in the Convention at Philadelphia than that a hostile Disposition would exist between the State and general Governments—that he was then thoroughly convinced & argued with much Decision and with great plausibility for the subversion of the State Government[s] so far as to reduce them to mere corporate Communities & that even in this Situation he supposed them dangerous to the general Government—but that it appeared probable that Reflection had induced him to correct that Sentiment.—He rose much agitated and charged me with an improper and uncandid Line of Conduct, attempted to reconcile his Declarations and denied the Sentiment being general in the Convention that one Government adverse to & at Enmity with the other & stated that his Ideas of a State Government were evinced by a proposition he brought forward to constitute the first Judges of each State a Court of Impeachments.—I was rising when Mr. Duane interposed and requested that an End might be put to the Altercation—I appealed to the Committee whether the Interposition was proper & as it had not been made while Hamilton was speaking—as all were silent I proceeded to observe that as a Member of the Convention I stood on the Floor as every other Member to endeavor to discover the Objects of that Constitution & the Motives which led to its Adoption—that the Injunction of Secrecy in the general Convention ceased with its Dissolution and that I did not consider myself bound by it—that the Declaration of Mr. Hamilton was not the Effect of a momentary Impression but of deliberate Reflection as he had brought forward a proposition in consequence of it—that this had in Object rendering the States so subordinate that none of their Measures could be carried without the Consent of an Officer to be appointed by the general Government. I told the Chairman that on this Occasion we had fortunately a person to w[hom?] we could appeal to determine whether I stated Things truly—Judge Yates then rose & as we were by this Time in a Ferment he recommended an Adjournment leaving every Thing in Statu quo to be resumed on Monday.

The Article of Taxation is not yet gone thro'—I thought proper to mention these Circumstances that you might be apprised of the particulars to prevent Misrepresentations.

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