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Francis Cummins Speech: South Carolina Convention 23 May 1788

Previous to the question being put in the convention for ratifying the constitution, the Rev. Mr. Cummins, rose and expressed himself in the following words.

MR. PRESIDENT,

When the question for adjournment was put the other day, from various considerations, I thought it prudent, and my duty, to be on the side for the adjournment.

But since the majority has determined that an adjournment would be improper, and the final question for adopting or rejecting the proposed constitution is consequently coming—a question truly interesting to every man, and to which every honest man will answer according to the best of his judgement: I beg leave to observe, however I may differ from some worthy gentlemen, that although I conceive there are defects in the constitution, as there must and ever will be found in all human things, yet when I consider the present state of our nation, and the very small probability of our obtaining in due time a better constitution than the one now under consideration; and when I compare the proposed constitution, with all its defects, and all its merits, to our present confederation, I confess I hope for and expect from our adoption of the constitution, more general good to the nation, than can arise from rejecting it. This being the conviction of my mind, [as?] arising from the strictest attention to the arguments on both sides, from the most impartial and dispassionate consideration of the constitution in my private hours; and also from considering that political abilities, and I hope integrity, equal at least to any in America, were employed in framing this constitution, and employed under such circumstances as could not possibly countenance or cherish a conspiracy against the happiness of this country: from considering moreover, that General Washington, whose unsullied and patriotic character, is equal, if not superior to any in this world; who would not suffer an everlasting blot to fall on the last period of his exalted reputation, by winking at the ruin of his country, signed the constitution. The conviction of my mind from those considerations, and others of a similar nature, being such, I cannot in my own judgement and conscience vote against the constitution—I must therefore with an eye to the public general good, risking all private hardships, vote for the ratification of it; persuaded that in the course of divine providence such amendments as may conduce to the happiness of the nation at large will soon take place. I have taken notice, that many gentlemen in this convention have acknowledged the proposed constitution is better than the present confederation and none have said to the contrary. We are sure we can have and enjoy this one, we are not sure we can ever have a better—common sense then says we ought to take this, and I as an individual must accordingly vote for it.

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