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An American

Norfolk and Portsmouth Journal, 23 April 1788 (excerpts)

“An American” was possibly Gouverneur Morris, who had represented Pennsylvania in the Constitutional Convention. Morris had used the pseudonym, “An American” several times during the Revolution, and the prose of this essay is reminiscent of his writings. Morris had been in Virginia since November assisting Robert Morris with the collection of debts. During their stay, they visited Portsmouth and Williamsburg, both near Norfolk, where the Norfolk, Va., *Norfolk and Portsmouth Journal* was printed.

. . . Five other States, with equal wisdom and cool deliberate argument, have assented to a Constitution so wisely contrived, and so fortifying the liberties of the people; it is hard to speak with that praise which is justly its due; the attentive perusal of it, and their approbation, will furnish its best encomium. They with the same ardor and magnanimity gloried in the cause of independance, and wish not after so many struggles, hardships, and slaughters which have deluged our land, and made a sacrifice of our citizens, to reject a government which seems to be stamped with the finger of the Deity. Being fully convinced of this melancholy truth, that the dismemberment of the Union (which will be no more than an heap of little Republics detached and divided, perpetually contending with each other, and in hourly danger of being usurped by a common enemy), must be the fatal conclusion of its rejection. In some of these States I allow there were a respectable minority who were averse to some parts, yet, when taken collectively, admired, and in admiring could not but reverence the spirit of freedom which every line is fraught with. The conduct of the minority of Massachusetts is too notorious to mention; the plaudits of posterity are never backward in giving merit its due praise. The great Washington has honoured them with his approbation (which appeared in a late Boston paper), and is alone a sufficient reward for the disinterested love of their country.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. IX: Virginia [2] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1990), 746–48.