

Draft of Address to Massachusetts Legislature after Ratification of the Constitution

Boston, circa 1788.

Autograph manuscript, 4 pages.

Gentlemen of the Senate & Gentlemen of the House of Representatives

It would have been very pleasing to me at the opening of the last Session to have met you, and to have expressed that respect which is due to the Senators and the Representatives of the people of the Commonwealth, but my ill State of health prevented me the pleasure & Satisfaction —

Since your Adjournment, I have Received no public Letters, and the recess of Congress has prevented my having any public communications, perhaps little Business in which the Union is concerned, excepting that of the organization of the general Government will be attended to before the Meeting of Congress under it —

I hope you will find upon Examining the Returns, that the people have Elected Representatives of tried & known Abilities, who feel themselves sincerely attached to the Interest of their Country, as well as to the principles upon which our glorious Revolution was effected, such Men will give the Commonwealth its full weight & proper share of Influence in the general Government.

There never was a time when the public Interest required more attention or greater Abilities than the present, the first impression of Laws under the Government of the United States will have a strong and lasting influence, those parts of the Constitution which are now vague and indefinite will receive an interpretation from those Acts, and great Exertions will be required to place the Commerce of the Southern & Northern States upon a proper degree of [*illegible*] Equality & Reciprocity of advantage —

The Ease and Security of the people depend so much upon the arrangement of the Judicial Department, that I cannot but conclude you will give your Senators and Representatives particular instructions upon this point [2]

By the tenth Section of the form of Government, no State is to keep Troops in a time of Peace without the Consent of Congress, this leads me to remind you that the Garrison on Castle Island must soon be reduced or licence obtained from Congress to keep Troops there, should the former be more agreeable to you, it will be necessary to make provision for the Disposal of the

Convicts who are confined there, but should the latter appear more Eligible, you will then consider whether it is not necessary to Instruct the Senators and Representatives of the Commonwealth to make application to Congress as soon as one is formed –

Should you think it best to continue this Garrison at the Expence of the State, I shall while I am honor'd by the people with the Office of Com[m]ander in Chief do all within my power to render it as little burthensome to them as possible. To keep the Garrison under the Idea of its being a Goal is not quite compatible with the honour of this Government, from which consideration you will see the propriety of a speedy application to Congress —

I take leave here to observe that I suppose an Application made to me by your committee in the last Session respecting the Appointment of a Captain to that Garrison was in order to procure in that way a support for His Honor the Lieutenant Governor; nothing would be more agreeable to my wishes than to have an adequate and honorable provision made for that Office, but as there ~~cannot~~ be no necessity in a time of peace for such an appointment, his Salary the ought to arise in another form, the obvious intention of our Constituents as expressed by ~~its~~ ^ of the Constitution form ^ is, that no Sine Cures shall be granted or any Emolument derived from an office, excepting such as are expressly annexed to it. The uniform practice of the [3] Legislature in their Grants to the Officers of Government has held up the same Idea – I am fully aware that these principles are considered by some as trifling, but they are not so consider'd by you or by your Constituents, they are principles well known in the Revolution of America, nor is it less my Duty to Support them because some people consider them of no Consequence. I beg leave to Recommend to you, Gentlemen, to make an honorable and generous provision for the Lieutenant Governor, and feel my self fully assured that it will be quite agreeable to the people to bear the Expense of it —

Gentlemen,

I Submit it to your Consideration whether you will instruct your Senators and Representatives to attend to the obtaining Amendments in the Constitution of the United States —

You will recollect that when that System was ratified by the Convention of this Commonwealth it was done on the Idea that Amendments should be finally effected. The

people have well grounded Expectations that this important matter will be attended to; for my own part I wish the World to know that I was Sincere in the part I Took on this Subject. I had not, nor will I ever have any other than plain, open & undisguised politicks –

I should dread as a great Calamity a new general Convention upon this Business. The form of Government has pointed out an easy method to procure alterations - Congress may propose to the Legislatures such Amendments as appear to be necessary, and in this way there can be no hazard, but another Convention might Amount to a dissolution of the Government, I feel my self obliged therefore to urge you to give our Senators [4] and Representatives such positive instructions on this Subject as may lead to the peace, Security and Tranquility of the Union—

[Endorsement]

This paper I selected from some hundred pieces of writing of John Hancock the President of the old Continental Congress which was placed in my hands by a descendent of the Quincys and heir of John Hancock and therefore I certify to the hand writing.

F. Semmes