

27. *On the New Constitution*

To Dupont de Nemours

Philadelphia, June 9, 1788.

Sir,

. . . But seven States having, before it arrived, ratified the new constitution, and others being daily expected to do the same, after the fullest discussion in convention, and in all the public papers, till everybody was

tired of the argument, it seemed too late to propose delay, and especially the delay that must be occasioned by a revision and correction of all the separate Constitutions. For it would take at least a year to convince thirteen States, that the Constitutions they have practised ever since the Revolution, without observing any imperfections in them so great as to be worth the trouble of amendment, are nevertheless so ill formed as to be unfit for continuation, or to be parts of a federal government. And, when they should be so convinced, it would probably take some years more to make the corrections.

An eighth State has since acceded, and when a ninth is added, which is now daily expected, the constitution will be carried into execution. It is probable, however, that, at the first meeting of the new Congress, various amendments will be proposed and discussed, when I hope your *Ouvrage sur les Principes et le Bien des Républiques en général*, &c. &c., may be ready to put into their hands; and such a work from your hand I am confident, though it may not be entirely followed, will afford useful hints, and produce advantages of importance.

But we must not expect, that a new government may be formed, as a game of chess may be played, by a skilful hand, without a fault. The players of our game are so many, their ideas so different, their prejudices so strong and so various, and their particular interests, independent of the general, seeming so opposite, that not a move can be made that is not contested; the numerous objections confound the understanding; the wisest must agree to some unreasonable things, that reasonable ones of more consequence may be obtained; and thus chance has its share in many of the determinations, so that the play is more like *tric-trac* with a box of dice. . . .