

TRANSCRIPTION

James Madison's Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention, May 25, 1787

Monday May 14th 1787 was the day fixed for the meeting of the deputies in Convention for revising the federal system of Government. On that day a small number only had assembled. Seven States were not convened till,

Friday 25 of May, when the following members appeared to wit: see Note A. viz

M^r. Robert Morris informed the members assembled* that by the instruction & in behalf, of the deputation of Pen^a. he proposed George Washington Esq^r. late Commander in chief for president of the Convention. Mr. Jn^o. Rutledge seconded the motion; expressing his confidence that the choice would be unanimous, and observing that the presence of Gen^l. Washington forbade any observations on the occasion which might otherwise be proper.

General Washington was accordingly unanimously elected by ballot, and conducted to the Chair by M^r. R. Morris and M^r. Rutledge; from which in a very emphatic manner he thanked the Convention for the honor they had conferred on him, reminded them of the novelty of the scene of business in which he was to act, lamented his want of better qualifications, and claimed the indulgence of the House towards the involuntary errors which his inexperience might occasion. [The nomination came with particular grace from Penna. ** as Doc^r. Franklin alone could have been thought of as a competitor. The Doc^r. was himself to have made the nomination of General Washington, but the state of the weather and of his health confined him to his house.]

M^r. Wilson moved that a Secretary be appointed, and nominated M^r. Temple Franklin.

Col Hamilton nominated Major Jackson.

On the ballot Maj^r. Jackson had 5 votes & M^r. Franklin 2 votes. On reading the credentials of the deputies it was noticed that those from Delaware were prohibited from changing the article in the Confederation establishing an equality of votes among the States.

The appointment of a Committee, consisting of Messrs. Wythe, Hamilton & C. Pinckney, on the motion of M^r. C. Pinckney, to prepare standing rules & orders was the only remaining step taken on this day.

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Note A: From Massachusetts Rufus King. N. York Robert Yates, and Alexr. Hamilton. N. Jersey, David Brearly, William Churchill Houston, and William Patterson. Pennsylvania, Robert Morris, Thomas Fitzsimmons, James Wilson, and Gouverneur Morris. Delaware, George Read, Richard Basset, and Jacob Broome. Virginia, George Washington, Edmund Randolph, John Blair, James Madison, George Mason, George Wythe, and James Mc.Clurg. N. Carolina, Alexander Martin, William Richardson Davie, Richard Dobbs Spaight, and Hugh Williamson. S. Carolina, John Rutledge, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Charles Pinckney, Pierce Butler. Georgia, William Few.

*Madison used the long or leading *s*, a character that looks similar to a backwards "f" but is used as an "s," often as the first of a double s as in assign or address.

**Madison abbreviated the word Pennsylvania, leaving out the letters "sylvani." The practice of the time, when leaving letters out of words, was to draw a tilde, a short straight or wavy line over the word, indicating the omission.

Citation: James Madison, *Notes on the Federal Convention*, May 25, 1787, Madison Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.