

19. For "*A Strong, Well-Mounted Government*"

To Washington

New York, July 3, 1787.

Dear Sir:

In my passage through the Jerseys, and since my arrival here, I have taken particular pains to discover the public sentiment, and I am more and more convinced that this is the critical opportunity for establishing the prosperity of this country on a solid foundation. I have conversed with men of information, not only in this city, but from different parts of the State, and they agree that there has been an astonishing revolution for the better in the minds of the people.

The prevailing apprehension among thinking men is, that the Convention, from the fear of shocking the popular opinion, will not go far enough. They seem to be convinced that a strong, well-mounted government will better suit the popular palate than one of a different complexion. Men in office are indeed taking all possible pains to give an unfavorable impression of the Convention, but the current seems to be moving strongly the other way.

A plain but sensible man, in a conversation I had with him yesterday, expressed himself nearly in this manner: The people begin to be convinced that "their excellent form of government," as they have been used to call it, will not answer their purpose, and that they must substitute something not very remote from that which they have lately quitted.

These appearances, though they will not warrant a conclusion that the people are yet ripe for such a plan as I advocate, yet serve to prove that there is no reason to despair of their adopting one equally energetic, if the Convention should think proper to propose it. They serve to prove that we ought not to allow too much weight to objections drawn from the supposed repugnance of the people to an efficient constitution. I confess I am more and more inclined to believe that former habits of thinking are regaining their influence with more rapidity than is generally imagined. . . .

I own to you, sir, that I am seriously and deeply distressed at the aspect of the counsels which prevailed when I left Philadelphia. I fear that we shall let slip the golden opportunity of rescuing the American empire from disunion, anarchy, and misery.

No motly or feeble measure can answer the end, or will finally receive the public support. Decision is true wisdom, and will be not less reputable to the Convention than salutary to the community. . . .