Table Annexed to Article: Why is March the Fourth March the Fourth? Excerpts from the Journals of the Continental Congress

Peter J. Aschenbrenner, *Purdue University*
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1787.

Congress assembled, present as before.

According to Order Congress resumed the Consideration of the form of a Constitution [3] for the United States of America framed and transmitted to Congress by the Convention of the States held at Philadelphia pursuant to the Resolve of the twenty-first day of February last. And a motion [4] being made by Mr R[ichard] H[enry] Lee seconded by Mr [Melaneton] Smith in the words following “Resolved That Congress after due attention to the Constitution under which this body exists and acts find that the said Constitution in the thirteenth Article thereof limits the power of Congress to the amendment of the present confederacy of thirteen states, but does not extend it to the creation of a new confederacy of nine states; and the late Convention having been {541} constituted under the authority of twelve states in this Union it is deemed respectful to transmit and it is accordingly ordered that the plan of a new federal constitution laid before Congress by the said Convention be sent to the executive of every state in this Union to be laid before their respective legislatures.”

A motion was made by Mr [Abraham] Clarke seconded by Mr [Nathaniel] Mitchel to postpone the consideration of that Motion in order to take up the following “That a copy of the Constitution agreed to and laid before Congress by the late Convention of the several states with their resolutions and the letter accompanying the same be transmitted to the executives of each state to be laid before their respective legislatures in order to be by them submitted to conventions of delegates to be chosen agreeably to the said resolutions of the Convention”.

———On the question to postpone for the purpose above mentioned the yeas and nays being required by Mr R[ichard] H[enry] Lee {542}
New Hampshire—
Mr. Langdon ay
Mr. Gilman ay
Massachusetts
Mr. Gorham ay
Mr. King ay
Mr. Dane ay
Connecticut
Mr. Johnson ay
Mr. Cook ay
New York
Mr. Smith no
Mr. Haring no
Mr. Yates no
New Jersey
Mr. Cadwallader ay
Mr. Clarke ay
Mr. Schurman ay
Pennsylvania
Mr. St. Clair ay
Mr. Irwine ay
Mr. Bingham ay
Mr. Armstrong ay
Delaware
Mr. Kearny ay
Mr. Mitchell ay
Maryland
Mr. Ross ay
Virginia
Mr. Grayson no
North Carolina
Mr. Madison ay
Mr. R. H. Lee no
Mr. C. C. Carrington ay
South Carolina
Mr. Blount ay
Mr. Kean ay
Mr. Huger ay
Georgia
Mr. Few ay
Mr. Pierce ay

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

On motion of Mr. [Edward] Carrington seconded by Mr. [William] Bingham the motion of Mr. [Abraham] Clarke was postponed to take into consideration the following motion viz. “Congress proceeded to the consideration of the Constitution for the United States by the late Convention held in the City of Philadelphia and thereupon resolved that Congress do agree thereto and that it be recommended to the legislatures of the several states to cause conventions to be held as speedily as may be to the end that the same may be adopted, ratified and confirmed. {543}

[Motion of Mr. Dane on new constitution] [1]

Whereas Congress sensible that there were defects in the present Confederation; and that several of the States were desirous that a Convention of Delegates should be formed to consider the name, and to propose necessary alterations in the federal Constitution; in February last
resolved that it was in their opinion expedient that a Convention of the States should be held for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, and reporting to Congress and the several legislatures, such alterations and provisions therein, as should when agreed to in Congress, and be confirmed by the States, render the federal Constitution adequate to the exigencies of Government, and the preservation of the Union.

And whereas it appears by Credentials laid before Congress, that twelve States appointed Delegates who assembled in Convention accordingly, and who did on the 17th instant, by the unanimous consent of the States then present in convention agree upon, and afterwards lay before Congress, a Constitution for the United States, to be submitted with the to a convention of Delegates, chosen in each State by the people thereof, under the recommendation of its legislature, for their Assent and ratification which constitution appears to be intended as an entire system in itself, and not as any part of, or alteration in the Articles of Confederation; to alterations in which Articles, the deliberations and powers of Congress are, in this Case, constitutionally confined, and whereas Congress cannot with propriety proceed to examine and alter the said Constitution proposed, unless it be with a view so essentially to change the principles and forms of it, as to make it an additional part in the said Confederation and the members of Congress not feeling themselves authorised by the forms of Government under which they are assembled, to express an opinion respecting a System of Government no way connected with those forms; but conceiving that the respect they owe their constituents and the importance of the subject require, that the report of the Convention should, with all convenient dispatch, be transmitted to the several States to be laid before the respective legislatures thereof therefore {544}

Resolved that there be transmitted to the supreme executive of each State a copy of the report of the Convention of the States lately Assembled in the City of Philadelphia signed by their deputies the seventeenth instant including their resolutions, and their letter directed to the President of Congress.

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[3] See September 20, 1787. This subject was first considered September 26, and was acted on September 28, 1787.
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1788. [3]


On the question to agree to the proposition [1] which was yesterday postponed by the State of Delaware the yeas and nays being required by Mr [Nicholas] Gilman

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<tr>
<th>New Hampshire</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Gilman</td>
<td>Mr Irvine</td>
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<td>Mr Wingate</td>
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<td>Mr Thatcher</td>
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<td>Mr Dane</td>
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<td>Mr Huntington</td>
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<td>Mr Wadsworth</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>Mr Clarke</td>
<td>Mr Few</td>
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<td>Mr Dayton</td>
<td>Mr Baldwin</td>
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So it was resolved as follows

[2] Whereas the Convention assembled in Philadelphia pursuant to the resolution of Congress of the 21st of Feb 1787 did on the 17th of Sept of the same year report to the United States in Congress assembled a constitution for the people of the United States, whereupon Congress on the 28 of the same Sept did resolve unanimously “That the said report with the resolutions and letter accompanying the same be transmitted to the several legislatures in order to be submitted to a convention of Delegates chosen in each state by {523} the people thereof in conformity to the resolves of the convention made and provided in that case” And whereas the constitution so reported by the Convention and by Congress transmitted to the several legislatures has been ratified in the manner therein declared to be sufficient for the establishment of the same and such ratifications duly authenticated have been received by Congress and are filed in the Office of the Secretary therefore Resolved That the first Wednesday in Jan next be the day for appointing Electors in the several states, which before the said day shall have ratified the said constitution; that the first Wednesday in Feb next be the day for the electors to assemble in their respective states and vote for a president; and that the first Wednesday in March next be the time and the present seat of Congress the place for commencing proceedings under the said constitution.

Congress proceeded to the election of the third commissioner [1] to form a board pursuant to the Ordinance of the 7 May 1787 and the ballots being taken Mr Abraham Baldwin was elected having been previously nominated by Mr [Pierpont] Edwards.

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[1] Organization of the government under the Constitution. See July 2, 8, 9, 14, 28, 30, August 4-7, 13, 26, September 2-4, and 12, 1788.

[2] The following resolution on the organization of the government under the Constitution was entered by Benjamin Bankson in *Ratifications of the Constitution*, pp. 180-181. Broadsides of this resolution, signed by Charles Thomson, are in *Papers of the Continental Congress*, Broadsides.

**TABLE 198C**

**SOURCES AND COMMENTS**


Footnotes keyed in above appear as in this original. The text is presented in Recreation Text Format.