

ROBERT A. RUTLAND and CHARLES F. HOBSON, editors. *The Papers of James Madison*. Volume 11, 7 March 1788–1 March 1789. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. 1977. Pp. xvi, 471. \$15.00.

This is the first volume of *The Papers of James Madison* to be published by the University of Virginia Press. Aside from the title page and the statement of that fact in the preface, there is no discernible break between this and the first ten volumes. Volume eleven continues the high standards of editing and book printing that have always characterized this series.

Volume eleven is, nonetheless, exceptional. It chronicles a vitally important year in American history. Between March 7, 1788 and March 1, 1789, the Virginia state convention ratified the Constitution, the Confederation Congress passed the first federal election resolution, and Virginia elected federal representatives and senators. The documents in this volume richly illuminate all three of these events and, of course, Madison's part in them. Therein lies the difficulty. Because the focal point of this volume is James Madison, the documents, be they Madison's papers or excerpts from the journals of the state convention or Confederation Congress, magnify Madison's role. This is not to say that Madison was not an important figure in New York or in Richmond, but these documents can leave a false image of his importance. At the Virginia Convention, for example, the reporter frequently could not hear Madison because he spoke so softly. In New York following ratification, the major stumbling block to passage of an election resolution was the future location of the federal capital. In that debate Madison remained a firm proponent of the banks of the Potomac until the very end.

Madison was, of course, a major figure in the

first federal election in Virginia's fifth district. And, to the extent that Madison's election contributed to the eventual adoption of a bill of rights, it is of major importance. But the election itself was not unlike similarly contested elections in New York, North Carolina, and Georgia. My point is that this volume and its companions, because of the breadth of their documentation and the excellence of the editing, will encourage us to assign to Madison a greater role than perhaps is appropriate. The volumes also encourage us to accept Madison's perceptions and point of view. Yet at times Madison was misinformed—for example, about the intentions of the Pennsylvania Antifederalists in the first federal elections. He also differed with other Federalists about the meaning of the Constitution and the intent of the framers—notably with Hamilton regarding the nature and power of the federal courts.

To the extent that this volume encourages us to accept Madison's views uncritically, it serves ironically to retard rather than expand our understanding of this crucial period of America's past.

STEVEN R. BOYD  
University of Texas,  
San Antonio