

The Papers of James Madison. Vol. 12: 2 March 1789–20 January 1790 with a Supplement 24 October 1775–24 January 1789. Ed. by Charles F. Hobson, Robert A. Rutland, William M. E. Rachal, and Jeanne K. Sisson. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979. xxiv + 498 pp. Notes and index. \$17.50.)

Volume twelve of this distinguished series contains no surprises. It covers the first session of the first Congress, when the new federal government was set in motion by James Madison and his associates in a continuation of that rare historic moment when a few powerful men had confidence that they might sway events by reason. It shows Madison still at his best—tough-minded while overwhelmingly serene—as he led the House in debates over four momentous political and constitutional issues: import and tonnage duties, the president's removal power, the location of the national capital, and the Bill of Rights.

The members of Congress, Madison wrote, were "in a wilderness without a single footstep to guide us." And the essential work of detail occasionally bore him down (as when he wrote to a friend of "the nauseous project of amend-ments"). Yet he seemed to understand that he knew the Constitution better

than others and that his participation in the proceedings of the House was critical. His parliamentary skills, especially when fending off pressures to place the capital on the Susquehanna, were dazzling. And his political strategy remained masterful. The author of the Bill of Rights had, after all, been the "father" of the Constitution and would not trifle with one to gain the other. "The structure and stamina of the Government," he insisted to Edmund Randolph, "are as little touched as possible" by the amendments.

As one would also expect, Madison's thoughts and actions in these months were utterly consistent with his earlier writings. He found amendments to the Constitution acceptable precisely because they would guard against what he still regarded as the greatest dangers: first, the legislative branch, "because it is under the least control" and, second, "the abuse of the community" or "the body of the people, operating by the majority against the minority." It may have been his conviction that the executive branch was by far the weakest that allowed him, in what soon would be considered a breach of the separation of powers, to offer confidential advice to George Washington and to write a number of the president's addresses.

As in previous volumes, the editors' explanatory contributions are accurate and appropriately modest. Rather than printing all of Madison's House remarks, they have selected for inclusion 67 of his 150 speeches. Most of these are taken from Thomas Lloyd's *Congressional Register*, since Madison made no manuscript copies for himself. Yet though the editors exclude on grounds of their voluminousness more than one-half of Madison's floor remarks, they include Jefferson's celebrated letter, addressed to Madison from Paris, which explores "whether one generation of men has a right to bind another." They would have done better to turn over more space to their subject and simply note the availability of Jefferson's letter in many other sources.

A supplement, containing nine Madison items from 1775 to 1789, concludes this volume.

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