

The Papers of James Madison. Volume 12: 2 March 1789–20 January 1790 with a supplement 24 October 1775–24 January 1789. Edited by Charles F. Hobson, Robert A. Rutland, *et al.* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979. Pp. xxvi, 498. \$17.50.)

With this volume the editors of *The Papers of James Madison* complete their recording of the part of Madison's career that qualifies him to stand with Franklin, Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, and Hamilton as a preeminent founder. Beginning with the study and skillful politicking that set the stage for the convention of 1787 (Vol. 9) through the convention itself (Vol. 10) and the brilliant campaign for ratification (Vol. 11), to the leadership he shared with Washington in establishing the new government

(Vol. 12), Madison took very nearly perfect advantage of a remarkable opportunity. He was able at once to act out Plato's aspiration to implant a philosophy in a real government and to fulfill the dream of Frederick the Great to use power to achieve enlightened statesmanship. These four volumes taken together let us see, perhaps uniquely, what happens when a first-rate mind, practiced in public life, has a chance first to create and then to give effect to a political constitution. This claims too much, perhaps, because there were many other influential participants, and Madison sometimes lost important objectives, but the impression in reading his papers for the years 1786 to 1789 is generally one of astonishing creativity and success.

This sense is especially marked in this volume because Madison is at Washington's right hand as the new Constitution is established, found to work well, and praised widely. Madison's correspondence continues to reveal him as the informal chairman of the group of national leaders who made plans for legislation, built support for the Constitution in the states, mulled over appointments to office, and attended to the details of setting up the departments of government. One sees Madison in three vital roles: he is chief political strategist in overcoming the strong, lingering antifederalism of his native Virginia, the most trusted and influential of Washington's advisers, and the floor leader of the House of Representatives during the precedent-setting first session of Congress. The editors have been especially skillful in presenting the records of this last role. Of more than 150 speeches made by Madison, the editors print 67, leaving out motions or remarks meaningless out of context and short, repetitious speeches. The result is as clear a picture as we are likely ever to have of Madison's intentions and thought as he dealt with the four major tasks of the House of Representatives: raise money, define executive authority (especially the removal power), propose amendments that became the Bill of Rights, and locate the national capital.

With this volume Madison's stature as a theorist, strategist, and statesman is firmly established, and his editors can take pride in having presented so faithfully the papers of the rise and maturation of this distinguished political intelligence. Yet, Madison's public career is but one-third over (to say nothing of nearly twenty years of active retirement), and the bulk of the materials in the office files is only barely started through the editorial process. We can be confident, though, that the editors, whose skill is apparent on every page of this volume, will continue, as they deal with the more fully documented parts of Madison's life, to find a deft balance between too much and too little "apparatus" and between too full and too selective publication. This virtuosity, moreover, leaves little doubt that their decision to work and publish simultaneously on Madison's congressional career (1789-1797) and on his Presidency (1809-1817), though fraught with peril, will prove a boon to scholars by making available more rapidly the papers of these major phases of his career.

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