

The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series. Volume IV: 5 November 1811–9 July 1812. With a Supplement, 5 March 1809–19 October 1811. Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne Kerr Cross, Ellen J. Barber, Anne Mandeville Colony, Jewel L. Spangler, Martha J. King, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999. Pp. [xlii], 675. \$65.00, ISBN 0-8139-1859-6.)

John Stagg, the chief editor of this volume, explained to a recent conference on "The National Visions of the Founders" how the idea and practice of federalism, balancing the powers and sovereignty of state and national governments, was central to the thought and career of James Madison. This volume, containing the letters, resolves, and other documents directed to the president as he led the nation toward war, and the papers he drafted and promulgated in response, reveals this balance and understanding interestingly, intricately, and dramatically. Madison's responsibility was to defend and govern a federal republic preparing for war without being unfaithful to the guiding precepts of such government: how could diplomacy be conducted, public opinion brought along, states' rights protected, Congress involved, military forces raised and led, and the executive department staffed and organized for war under a Constitution resting on "We the People" of both the states and the

nation, rather than on royal or imperial decree? The documents printed here will be a vital resource for any work seeking to understand the causes and nature of the War of 1812.

Included, for example, are dozens of the various messages received by the president concerning the decisive issues about the coming of the war. Memorialists from Northampton, Massachusetts, declared commercial restriction and war with Great Britain to be "odious to New England, . . . it impoverishes her citizens, and impairs their virtue by repressing enterprise and industry"; they also viewed as "the most execrable evil . . . an Alliance, as hateful as it would be fatal, with the government of France" (p. 535). Citizens of Maury County, Tennessee, though, pledged "every assistance in our power to secure a successful prosecution of a war" against a power (Great Britain) that "continues to trample upon our rights, and to Violate every principle hitherto held sacred amongst Nations" (p. 555). In December 1811 Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, soon to be vice president, warned of New England "malecontents [hoping] to produce a civil war" (p. 64) and passed along extracts from letters of John Quincy Adams in St. Petersburg, who feared that unless such elements intent on disunion were "put down," the United States, instead of becoming "the most populous & most powerful People, ever combined under one social compact," would become "an endless multitude of little insignificant clans and tribes, at eternal War with one another" (p. 65). On the other hand, pacifist George Logan begged Madison to use "[t]he fame you so justly acquired in promoting the liberties of your country, and in establishing the present happy form of the government of the United States," in order "to prevent war, by which both may be endangered" (p. 72). On all sides appeals were made to the large issues of preserving American liberty, its republican institutions, and its federal system amid divisive, near-treasonable opposition at home and the ravages of a world war between Britain and France abroad.

The practical and political problems Madison faced are also omnipresent. Sectional balance (required by the federal system) compelled him, he thought, to leave incompetent secretaries from Massachusetts and South Carolina at the War and Navy Departments respectively; while such considerations, as well as respect for the seniority of now-elderly Revolutionary War veterans, led to the disastrous appointments of William Hull and Henry Dearborn to lead the American forces poised to combat British arms in Canada. Jefferson commiserated with Madison regarding the difficulties of dealing with Congress: "That a body containing 100 lawyers in it . . . should direct the measures of a war is, I fear, impossible" (p. 195). Though Madison was clear, resolute, and in some ways adroit in leading the nation toward war, he nonetheless failed to get the nation ready or to ensure effective leadership. One wonders how an Alexander Hamilton or an Andrew Jackson might have more vigorously, even dictatorially, organized the nation—something Madison deliberately (and wisely?) did not do because of his republican principles.

As usual, this splendidly edited volume causes one to marvel at the diligence, skill, and insight of John Staggs and his staff. The policy of abstracting and summarizing many documents to cope with the much-enlarged volume of executive office papers holds up well in this volume, almost halfway through the Presidential Series. (With the Secretary of State Series nearly as well

along, and the Retirement Series planned, the end of this already half-century-long project becomes faintly discernable.) As is the case with virtually all the volumes covering the 1801–1817 period, there is little new or in-depth insight into Madison's own thinking. The papers document instead the well-informed, conscientious, and public-spirited conduct of a public office, an enterprise at the heart of Madison's lifelong preoccupation with good republican government.

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