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## **“The Constitution Makers and the Public, 1785-1790”**

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What was the ablest work ever done in America in public relations? An interesting question, to which one historian has already given a succinct answer.

The fullest critical biography of Alexander Hamilton thus far written is that by Professor Broadus Mitchell of Rutgers University, which was published in 1957. One chapter is entitled "The Art of Persuasion," and midway it carries one of the most remarkable tributes to Hamilton ever penned. Professor Mitchell discusses in it *The Federalist Papers*, a majority of which were written by Hamilton and nearly all the others by James Madison. "In parrying blows against and enlisting support for the Constitution," he writes, with his eyes on the year 1788, "the authors of *The Federalist* did the best job of public relations in history."

This statement is substantially endorsed by other historians of the framing and adoption of the American Constitution, our most precious national possession. Supporting the statement are George Bancroft, John Bath McMaster, John Fiske, the two Britons James Bryce and F. S. Oliver and various later writers.

When the Constitution was signed in September, 1787, its ultimate fate swayed in the balance. It had to be accepted by the Continental Congress; it then had to be submitted to special conventions in the thirteen states; and it had to be ratified by nine states, or two-thirds of the whole number. Had a popular referendum been held that autumn, unquestionably a majority of Americans would have voted against it – so at least most historians assert. As the Constitutional Convention adjourned, Benjamin Franklin had pointed to the armchair which Washington had occupied, on the back of which a brilliant half-sun was emblazoned. "As I have been sitting here all these weeks," he remarked, "I have often wondered whether yonder sun is rising or setting. But now I know that it is a rising sun!" Other delegates were far less hopeful. They feared that five or more states would reject the new instrument. If they did, the sun might set, after all, in national confusion, impotence and even anarchy.

Were not its two doughtiest champions, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, mere boys? They looked so to most of the country. And was not the proposed new government completely unprecedented in history? This was the first time that a strongly united federation, built on principles of liberty, a republic, had ever been planned for a continental domain. History had

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seen a number of loose confederations, such as the Achaean League of twelve Greek cities, which were failures just as the loose union under the Articles of Confederation was proving a failure. History had seen the rise of small unitary republics such as Holland and Switzerland, which endured only because they were tiny. All the great empires of history, from Alexander to Louis XIV, had been despotisms. A federal government for the whole continent, uniting national strength with local liberty, would be the boldest experiment in the annals of mankind; and was it not too bold?

Then, too, many deemed the times unfavorable for risk and experiment. The 13 states were in the throes of both political and economic crisis. They had just felt the shock of Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts, in which an armed mob had marched upon the arsenal in Springfield. "Our country," declared Fisher Ames of Massachusetts "has stood upon the verge of ruin .... But much remains to do. Sedition, though intimidated, is not disarmed. It is a period of adversity. We are in debt to foreigners. Large sums are due internally. The taxes are in arrears, and are accumulating. Manufacturers are destitute of materials, capital, and skill. Agriculture is despondent; consumers bankrupt... The combustibles are collected; the mine is prepared; the smallest spark may again produce an explosion." To many, the economic depression and political disorders were an argument for a strong new frame of government; but others were anxious to avoid panic remedies and hasty action. The French minister had reported to his government in 1784: "There is now in America no general government -- neither Congress, nor president, nor head of any one administrative department." Many lovers of state authority wanted to keep the government weak. When the Continental Congress asked for power to lay imposts, New York had vetoed the proposal.

If Hamilton and Madison, by mobilizing a constructive minority of Americans to convert or thrust aside an obstructive or indifferent majority, really accomplished "the best job of public relations in history," then their skills and methods, the media they used in reaching the four million people scattered from Maine to Georgia, and their modes of appealing to popular psychology, are well worth the attention of public relations experts today. The world of the late 18th Century seems quaintly strange, but the difficulties to be met in a great task of popular persuasion, and the ways in which brilliant men attain success, are much the same in all periods. However, the two principal champions of the Constitution faced a far more momentous ordeal than any business leader ever faced -- for example, those who persuaded the public to take a favorable attitude toward United States Steel when J. P. Morgan organized it; or than any labor leaders ever faced -- say the heads of CIO when Walter Reuther brought it to birth; or any political party in a hard-fought campaign, for politicians use routine machinery in traditional ways. The ordeal of Hamilton and Madison was as difficult as that of Woodrow Wilson when he tried to convert Americans to acceptance of the League of Nations Covenant -- and their success much greater. Let us look at their work in detail.

We may fix a respectful eye upon Alexander Hamilton as, on an October day in 1787, he came out of his beautiful house in Wall Street, then the most fashionable thoroughfare in New York City, and with the quick step, alert gaze, and optimistic air that were his characteristics, walked to the office of the *Independent Journal* to begin his campaign. He might well be self-confident -- his whole career had been one of precocious achievement. It was but six years since he had

commanded a storming party at the siege of Yorktown, leaping to the parapet of the British redoubt under heavy fire as he shouted to his light infantry to follow. It was only five years since he had been admitted to the bar in New York, studying Blackstone in his own dynamic fashion, not sitting at a desk, but pacing up and down his chamber until he had covered (he thought) fully two thousand miles; and in these five years he had become a brilliantly successful attorney. During the war he had fallen madly in love, had married into the wealthy Philip Schuyler family, and had found in his Betsy an ideal wife. During the war, too, his burning ambition, audacity and resourcefulness had captivated most of the leaders with whom he worked, including Washington and Lafayette.

Never once had he really failed, and never had anybody worked so hard. "It is rare," wrote his friend, Fisher Ames, "that a man who owes so much to nature descends to seek more from industry; but he seemed to depend on industry as if nature had done nothing for him." Amid his toils, his optimism bubbled over in jest and gaiety. Just as he came to the bar he wrote Lafayette: "I have been employed for the last ten months in rocking the cradle and studying the art of fleecing my neighbors." Yet the short, dapper attorney of chiseled features and piercing eye, only thirty-two as he now strode into the *Daily Advertiser* office with his first Federalist Paper, seemed to have a lifetime of experience behind him: a West Indian boyhood, study in King's College, youthful pamphleteering stamped with genius, seven years of fighting and staff service in the war, prominence in the state legislature and Continental Congress, and legal battles that showed a generosity and vision much like Lincoln's. He was one of the most precocious figures of his century -- as precocious as William Pitt, the Younger.

Two peculiarities of Hamilton had transcendent importance for America's future. First, he was an American -- not a New Yorker, not a Middle States man, but an American. Born in the far Atlantic island of Nevis, educated as much in New York as anywhere, earning his highest distinction as Washington's aide while headquarters shifted from state to state, going into the Continental Congress as soon as the guns were silent, he had sunk his roots not into any state but into the republic. He had no such local allegiance as Samuel Adams, George Clinton, or Richard Henry Lee; whose families had been in Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia for generations -- all his loyalty was to the nation. But did a nation yet really exist? In the snowdrifts of Valley Forge he had been horrified by the spectacle of troops dying of starvation and cold while Congress, snugly well-fed at York, only a hundred miles away, refused to aid them. After the war he had been heartsick over the blundering helplessness of the weak Confederation government. How many men, he wondered, really wanted a nation? Certainly not Sam Adams, George Clinton, or Richard Henry Lee, all unable to look beyond state boundaries.

His other peculiarity was simply this: He was a born public relations man -- a born master of persuasion by the spoken and written word. He was more a master of persuasion than John Locke in England or Montesquieu in France, for though each of these men possessed, like Hamilton, a remarkably clear, original, and comprehensive mind, neither could unite mastery of statecraft and of pen, as Hamilton did. He had shown his flair for public appeal when after the Boston tea party, a mere lad of seventeen, he wrote a series of fiery articles for *Holt's Journal* in New York, and after the Boston Port Act he delivered an impassioned address to the crowd in

"the Fields" where City Hall Park now stands. He could no more be kept from using his talent for public relations than could the cruder, fierier Tom Paine.

In October, 1787 we may also eye with respect James Madison as he sat in his study in his plain Virginia country house with a fine view of the Blue Ridge. Looking younger than his 36 years, short, slight, sharp-featured, with balding brow, he was unimpressive. He had none of Hamilton's vibrancy and dash. His career had been purely that of a legislator in the Virginia House and the Continental Congress. He had done no fighting; he shrank from writing newspaper essays or addressing public gatherings. He was a thoughtful introvert, a student, a man who impressed others solely by intellectual power. "He blends together," William Pierce of Georgia wrote after watching him in the Constitutional Convention, "the profound politician with the scholar. In the management of every great question he evidently took the lead in the convention, and though he cannot be called an orator, he is a most agreeable, eloquent, and convincing speaker. From a spirit of industry and application which he possesses in a most eminent degree, he always comes forward the best informed man of any point in debate." Pierce added that the Virginian was a gentleman of great modesty, sweetness of temper, and conversational charm. Clearly, little Madison would be a power in small groups of leaders, as the electric Hamilton was a power in large assemblages.

It was because they were so unlike that Hamilton and Madison made so effective a partnership in their public relations work for the Constitution. They supplemented each other much as long afterward Theodore Roosevelt and Elihu Root did in dealing with many policies; or much as Harry Truman and George Marshall did in giving the world, with full American support, the Marshall plan and the Economic Cooperation Administration. Hamilton and Madison had fast become well acquainted in the commercial convention of delegates from five states at Annapolis in 1786, which resulted in the call for the Constitutional Convention of the following year. That commercial gathering brought together some remarkably sagacious men. One was Tench Coxe, a Philadelphia lawyer of handsome face and winning manners, who shared all Hamilton's views respecting the need for a strong national government, particularly to develop commerce, manufacturing, and a home market for agricultural products. Tench Coxe supported these views by arguments drawn from Adam Smith. Another was George Read of Delaware, a tall, thin, hatchet-faced signer of the Declaration of Independence, who was again a thorough-going Hamiltonian. The ablest of the delegates by far, however, were the two brilliant young men who quickly learned to admire each other's brains, fervent zeal and skill in exposition.

Hamilton and Madison may have formed their alliance in riding together from Annapolis to Philadelphia after the commercial convention and they certainly cemented it by their labors in the Constitutional Convention the following year. The history of that immortal convention has been written so many times and from so many points of view, that it seems impossible to say anything new respecting it. Yet it has never been set down as a public relations challenge with special reference to the vital requirements for making it acceptable, after completion, to the 13 states and their people. It has been written as if the delegates of 1787 had been intent on making the best possible constitution to suit themselves, without specific attention to its popular acceptability afterward. Perhaps Washington, Franklin, Madison, James Wilson, Roger Sherman, and the other eminent members did think primarily of agreeing on a good document, and were

ready then to let it take its chances of acceptance. They may have believed that the checks and balances they put into the Constitution, and the compromises it embodied -- those between the large and small states, the slave-trade and anti-slave-trade states, the landless states and those with huge Western claims -- would go far to suppress opposition and win ratification.

Obtaining national acceptance of the Constitution was essentially a public relations exercise, and Hamilton, with his keen instinct for public relations, took thought not only to the product but to the ready acquiescence of thoughtful people; and he imparted his views to others. To gain a proper hearing, two basic requirements must be met. First, the Constitution must be offered with the almost unanimous endorsement of the convention. Some influential members had special ideas which were not adopted. Franklin, for example, would have liked a unicameral legislature, a one-chamber Congress. Hamilton wished to have the President and upper chamber elected for life. Both agreed to give up their pet ideas for the sake of unanimity. "Yes," Franklin remarked, "when a joiner wishes to fit two boards, he sometimes pares off a bit from both." In the end, the Constitution received signatures from 12 states, Hamilton signing alone for New York. The second basic requirement to ensure a popular hearing was a clear provision for future amendment. A constitution devoid of any legal mode of amendment would come near to being a constitution changeable only by revolution. Hamilton knew that the people would never accept such a framework. William Penn had been the first man in the world to introduce an amending clause, doing this in his Frame of Government for Pennsylvania in 1682; and now, in 1787, Hamilton helped insert in the new Federal Constitution a provision that Congress or the states might propose future changes.

Once the Constitution came before the country, the rapidity with which Hamilton moved was a striking exemplification of good public relations. He knew that if a vacuum develops in popular opinion, ignorant and foolish views will fill it. No time must be lost in providing accurate facts and sound ideas. The Constitutional Convention ended September 17, 1787, and 12 days later the Continental Congress voted almost unanimously to lay the new framework before a convention in each state. Within the month, on October 27, Hamilton began the immortal series of Federalist Papers, his first essay appearing in three New York publications, the *Independent Journal*, the *Daily Advertiser*, and the *Packet*. In that brief period, he had gone home, straightened out his law business, enlisted Madison and John Jay as co-authors, and made his arrangements with the press.

The ensuing battle to bring hostile or indifferent majorities over to ratification will interest students of public relations first of all because of the grand strategy of Hamilton, Madison, and other champions of the new Constitution. Here also are lessons in the magnificent use of the published word, the well-planned argument, throughout the United States; in the careful study of adverse psychology and employment of devices to meet it, specially evinced in Massachusetts; in the resort to compromise upon non-essentials to gain the battle for essentials; and in the employment of eloquence -- and of massive economic interests -- in the seemingly hopeless struggle in New York. The contest in Virginia exhibited other special skills in public relations. Finally, some brief discussion of the grand result is needed.

All realistic men understood that, taking the country as a whole, the initial odds were overwhelmingly against the Constitution. In New York, the party in power was bitterly opposed, and Governor George Clinton was a mortal enemy of the "New Roof." He, with Robert Yates and John Lansing, two New York delegates who had quitted the Constitutional Convention in angry revolt, would use every weapon to defeat it. In Virginia, the phalanx organized against a better government dismayed Madison. He came home from Philadelphia to find Richard Henry Lee, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, asserting that the Constitution was the work of monarchy men, military men, aristocrats, idlers, and haters of the South. Benjamin Harrison was declaring that it carried the seeds of civil war, armed tyranny and subjection of Southerners. George Mason was against it; so was Patrick Henry; so were the Nelsons, Cabells and Pages. Most of Pennsylvania west of the Susquehanna was hostile. In Massachusetts, two revered veterans of the Revolutionary struggle, Samuel Adams and John Hancock, were supposedly in the opposition. "Judging from the newspapers," Madison wrote of the Northern and Middle States, "one would suppose that the adversaries were the most numerous and the most in earnest."

Yet as the odds rose, so did the fighting spirit of Hamilton and his principal lieutenants.

The grand strategy of Federalist leaders was fixed by the time sequence of conventions. If five states rejected the Constitution, it was dead. Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut, whose conventions met first, might with good luck be counted upon to give their consent. But then would come the Massachusetts convention and popular sentiment in Massachusetts was clearly negative. If the state which had led the revolt against Britain, which had produced such redoubtable leaders as John and Samuel Adams, and which represented so much of the wealth and brains of the nation, rejected the Constitution, all its supporters would lose heart. The Virginia convention would come next -- and Virginia would certainly follow in the steps of Massachusetts. If both were lost, George Clinton could easily carry the day in New York and North Carolina or Rhode Island would complete the work of ruin.

Hence it was that from the outset the Federalists centered their main attention and well-planned strategic effort upon Massachusetts, Virginia and New York. They knew that they must work with frenzied haste, for the Massachusetts convention was to sit in January and February, the Virginia convention early in June, and the New York convention later that month. Hamilton had perceived that the one way in which to reach these crucial states promptly and efficiently was through the printed word -- through his Federalist series. By the time the Massachusetts convention met on January 9, 1788, the Federalist had reached its thirty-sixth essay. By the time the Virginia convention gathered in Richmond on June 2, Federalist No. 85, the last of the great sequence, was nearly a week old. These essays were republished by other papers throughout the United States, seized upon with avidity by all thoughtful citizens, and passed from hand to hand. In that era the daily and weekly journals were almost the sole medium of public discussion; they took the place that radio, television, weekly reviews, monthly magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets take today. And the commanding power of the Federalist essays was at once recognized. So great was the demand for their collection in permanent form that before the New York convention met in Poughkeepsie on June 17, and even before the Virginia convention, the publishing house of J. & A. McLean in Hanover Square, near Hamilton's house in Wall Street,

had issued the whole series in two well-bound, well-printed volumes. The last eight essays were actually brought out in book form before they appeared in the press.

We may search the annals of public relations in vain for a piece of literary advocacy equal to the Federalist Papers. They were written at white heat by Hamilton and Madison -- John Jay contributing only five essays. These men dashed their writing off amid the distractions of busy public and private careers; legend states that Hamilton wrote his fast paper in the cabin of a sloop descending the Hudson. Fortunately, Madison, the principal author of the Constitution, and Hamilton, its greatest advocate, wrote from full minds and hearts. No Americans knew better the course of actual government and of constitutional theory in this country from 1620 to 1787. None had seen so far into the future possibilities of American government, if the natural operations of the new Constitution were given a fair trial, for they combined imagination with realism. They set forth the principles of the Constitution makers with reason, moderation and authority. In doing so, they not merely explained away misunderstandings bred by prejudice, and dispelled the nightmares of unreasoning prejudice -- the fears of a king, of a military autocracy, of crushing taxes, of excessive centralization; they laid down the most expert commentary on the text of the Constitution. This masterly exposition was not important only for 1788. Later it proved invaluable for the development of political thought and constitutional practice in the United States -- and in Australia, South Africa, Canada, Nigeria, India, and other federated nations as well.

"The Federalist," writes John Fiske, "probably accomplished more toward ensuring the adoption of the Constitution than anything else that was said or done in that eventful year." The vision shown by Madison in such papers as Federalist No. 10, explaining the role of economic forces in politics, deserved high praise. Still more commendable were the flexibility of Hamilton's mind and the magnanimity of his spirit as exhibited in his championship of a government quite different from the one he had personally favored. He mastered the ideas of Madison, James Wilson and Roger Sherman until they seemed his own, and expounded them with a greater zeal and force than these men could command. Through it all Hamilton was tactful, suave, and objective. He never attacked his opponents; he reasoned with them. He employed not invective, but a grave and moving eloquence.

Many men read his final plea with tears. He quoted an apt statement by David Hume. "To balance a large state or society," wrote Hume, "whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty, that no human genius is able, by the mere dint of reason and reflection, to affect it. The judgments of many must unite in the work; experience must guide their labor; time must bring it to perfection and the feeling of inconveniences must correct the mistakes which they *inevitably* fall into in their first trials and experiments." And Hamilton continued:

"These judicious reflections contain a lesson of moderation to all the sincere lover; of the Union, and ought to put them upon their guard against hazarding anarchy, civil war, a perpetual alienation of the States from each other, and perhaps the military despotism of a victorious demagogue, in the pursuit of what they are not likely to obtain, but from time and experience. It may be in me a defect of political fortitude, but I acknowledge that I

cannot entertain an equal tranquility with those who affect to treat the dangers of a longer continuance in our present situation as imaginary. A nation, without a national government, is, in my view, an awful spectacle. The establishment of a Constitution, in time of profound peace, by the voluntary consent of a whole people, is a prodigy, to the completion of which I look forward with trembling anxiety."

Students of public relations who take time to read the Federalist in any of its almost countless editions will reap three rewards: a firmer understanding of the critical events of 1787-88, a better knowledge of our Constitution and a lesson in the value of reason and moderation in molding mass opinion.

As Hamilton, Madison and their associates made magnificent use of the written word in reaching the whole country, so they made adroit use of psychology in dealing with the first crucial state, Massachusetts. Here the convention was unquestionably opposed to ratification when it gathered. Here, too, as a good Federalist wrote, "from the first hour the prospect darkened with every day." A member who sent Madison an analysis of the situation defined three powerful groups of enemies. One comprised the selfish citizens who favored cheap state paper money, and the right to use it to pay their debts. Another embraced the late participants in Shays' rebellion and their friends, a body numerous in the three western counties; eighteen or twenty delegates in the convention had actually served in Shays' army. The third group was made up of members from the province of Maine, then part of Massachusetts. Many of them were squatters, who feared losing the title to their lands under an honest national government; while others feared that their cherished plan of making a separate state would be defeated.

Against these hostile groups the manufacturing and commercial interests and the professional people, lawyers, doctors, and clergy, seemed weak. Since an early vote would defeat the Constitution, the Federalists fought frenziedly for time; and meanwhile they sought a psychological opening. They intently studied the two commanding personages of the convention, John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Both were suspicious, stubborn and negative-minded. But Hancock, who between fits of gout presided in rich velvet and lace, was the proudest man in the Bay State, the very embodiment of pompous egotism, a peacock who had once coveted the position of commander-in-chief of the American armies. He was open to flattery laid on with a trowel. Plain Sam Adams, of homespun origins, was quite above flattery; but he was not above popular pressure. He always fancied himself a man of the people, their favorite and their tribune; he would keep step with them in order to pose as their leader. He was part servant, part master, of the Boston town meeting, for to him the town meeting meant the people, and the people meant supreme wisdom. Scrutinizing the two men, the Federalists sought crevices in their armor.

The defenders of the Constitution in Massachusetts, Hamilton's friend Fisher Ames, with Theophilus Parsons, Rufus King, and James Bowdoin, made just the right psychological moves at just the shrewdest moment. Hancock, then governor, was given tactful pressure by the public-spirited lawyers and merchants. Worried and uncertain, he took refuge in his gout, staying at home wrapped in flannels. Solicitous friends of the Constitution called with sympathy and compliments. They assured Hancock that the fate of the nation depended upon him. If he befriended commerce and industry, if he accepted the Constitution that Washington and Franklin



so heartily approved, Massachusetts would obey his orders, and the whole country would follow; but if he said no, confusion, dismay, and ruin would ensue. Hancock began to yield. Thereupon Theophilus Parsons wrote out a speech for the sick governor, thus becoming one of the first American "ghost-writers." While the convention waited, Hancock was helped into his coach, driven to the hall in Boston's Long Lane, and carried to his place by a group of young gentlemen. In an expectant hush, he rose, apologized for his feebleness and declared that nothing but the greatness of the emergency would have brought him from his sickbed. Then, the effectiveness of his appearance doubled, he read the speech that Parsons had prepared. A friend hastily seized the manuscript lest onlookers see that it was not in Hancock's hand; and dozens of hesitant delegates crossed to the governor's side.

Psychological weapons were used with equal dexterity upon Sam Adams. Advocates of the Constitution, according to a confidential memorandum in his official biography, knew that flattery would be useless. But they also knew that he had great confidence in the instinct of the people, and modestly doubted his own judgment when it differed from this instinct. So they persuaded leading mechanics of Boston to hold a meeting at the Green Dragon Inn in Union Street, pass resolutions for the Constitution, and send a committee to present them to Adams. Both the meeting and the firm character of the resolves took Adams by surprise. "Why was I not asked to attend?" he demanded; and the reply, "Oh, we wanted the voice of the people," impressed him still further. The account of the incident long afterward given by Daniel Webster may be exaggerated, but it is so graphic that no narrator can resist the temptation to quote it again. Adams, says Webster, received the resolutions from the hand of Paul Revere.

"How many mechanics," asked Mr. Adams, "were at the Green Dragon when the resolutions were passed?" "More, sir," was the reply, "than the Green Dragon could hold." "And where were the rest, Mr. Revere?" "In the streets, sir." "And how many were there in the streets?" "More, sir, than the stars in the sky!"

Sam Adams surrendered to this show of public sentiment, combined as it was with arguments of cool reason; surrendered much as Senator Arthur Vandenberg generations afterwards gave up his isolationism under similar pressures of public feeling. Adams gained a new inner conviction. But he did not swing about to the support of the Constitution without receiving a concession which illustrated another of the virtues of the Constitution men in public relations -- their willingness to give way on non-essentials in order to win a victory for essentials. Adams, like many others, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that certain constitutional amendments ought to be adopted at an early date. He wished for some guarantees that we now have in the Bill of Rights, or first ten amendments; he desired an explicit statement that all powers not expressly delegated to the Federal Government were reserved to the states; and he asked for restrictions upon the powers of Congress to lay taxes and to grant commercial monopolies. Friends of the Constitution embodied these proposals by Adams in a set of nine "Conciliatory Propositions," written by Theophilus Parsons, which they cunningly introduced as if they came from John Hancock. Adams encouraged this impression, and vigorously urged the ratification of the Constitution upon the understanding that the changes would then be brought forward.

On February 6, Massachusetts voted to ratify 187 to 168. The majority, though narrow, was decisive. It seemed almost a miracle that friends of the Constitution had won it; but they had accomplished the feat by two master-strokes -- a shrewd use of psychology in dealing with Hancock and Adams, and a willingness to accept the "Conciliatory Propositions" as possible future amendments. They deserve special praise for permitting this harmless compromise. Had Woodrow Wilson, laboring in 1919 to obtain our adoption of the League of Nations, been willing to accept the Senate reservations which Colonel House, Senator Gilbert Hitchcock, and Ambassador Reading all wished him to take, the United States might have entered the world organization and Wilson's standing as a master of public relations might have been greatly enhanced.

Massachusetts was the sixth state to ratify; Maryland and South Carolina in the next few weeks became the seventh and eighth. The weight of these eight ratifications lay behind Madison, John Marshall, Governor Edmund Randolph and Henry Lee when they went into the Virginia convention to do battle for the Constitution against Patrick Henry, George Mason and Richard Henry Lee. Fortunately they had other forces which they could invoke. One, of course, was the growing influence of the Federalist Papers, now complete. They were read all over Virginia with special gusto because many men knew that Madison was co-author, and they delighted reasonable men. Another force was the mighty reputation of George Washington, Virginia's greatest son. His enthusiasm for the Constitution was known to all; and all knew that if it went into effect he would be the first President. The Federalists skillfully developed every favoring element in the situation, and made particularly effective use of the argumentative power of Madison and Marshall. Though the convention took three weeks for debate, it voted for ratification 89 to 79 before June ended.

Victory throughout the nation was now in a sense achieved, for the favorable action of New Hampshire at the same time gave the Constitution ten states, or one more than was necessary. Nevertheless, "the decision of New York was still awaited with tense anxiety. If that state held aloof, the Union would be cleft in two, for New York stretched from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes. Governor George Clinton, hardheaded, narrow and stubborn, was the bitterest enemy of the Constitution in the whole country. He could not bear the idea of yielding to an authority greater than his own; and the first day of the sessions at Poughkeepsie found two-thirds of the delegates standing beside him. It was then that the Federalists made fantastically successful use of another weapon in their armory -- eloquence. Brilliant as was Hamilton's employment of the written word in the Federalist, his resort to the spoken word on the floor at Poughkeepsie was still more marvelous.

Again and again, twenty-six times in all, he spoke with deepening passion and irresistible logic. James Kent, later one of the nation's greatest jurists, was present as a spectator. He records that the convention "formed the most splendid constellation of the sages and patriots of the Revolution which I have ever witnessed"; that the intensity of the public interest in its debates was something almost inconceivable; and that Hamilton was a host in himself. His burning eloquence, in fact, was never again matched in America until Webster appeared. In argument after argument, he crushed all objections, until at last the foremost speaker on Clinton's side,

Melancthon Smith, surrendered and came over to the Federalists. With that dramatic climax, the battle was ended. New York ratified the Constitution 30 to 27, and the Union was safe.

It is not strange that Talleyrand, who spent some time in America, later grouped Hamilton with William Pitt and Napoleon Bonaparte as the greatest intellects of the era.

These Federalist labors in 1787-88 constitute, we repeat, the greatest work ever done in America in the field of public relations. They make so lustrous a chapter in our national history, they were so essential to our greatness as a nation, and they are so integral a part of the immortal careers of Hamilton and Madison, that we naturally think of them in a larger setting. They are memorable for far greater reasons than the light they throw upon the art of public relations. Moreover, the powers of Hamilton and Madison transcended mere talent; they were powers of genius, especially as displayed by Hamilton, not easily defined and still less easily imitated. Nevertheless, these labors may well be studied by all workers engaged in the varied, complex and difficult tasks of public relations. They teach certain clear lessons of method; and they teach a still more important moral lesson, for they prove that to men of courage, determination, reason, and tact, no sound public task, whatever the odds, is impossible.

XI (1785-1790). Copyright: The text is in the public domain. People: Editor: Worthington Chauncey Ford. The endorsement of the Constitution by Congress. Opposition of Mason and Lee. The sentiment in Virginia. The policy of Mason. Hopes he will be in the State convention. The position of the Governor. To Henry Knox, October . . . . 171. Severe drought. Activity of the opponents of the Constitution. Questions to be solved. Effect of Mason's and Randolph's refusing to sign. To Alexander Hamilton, October 18th . . . 173. The constitution makers and the public: 1785-1790. September 1978. Public Relations Review. One of America's leading historians, Dr. Nevins had a varied background, which included journalism and public relations as well as a distinguished career in the research, writing and teaching of history. After a decade as an editorial writer and critic on New York City newspapers and periodicals, he started teaching history at Cornell University in 1927, and moved the following year to Columbia University where he was professor of American History until 1958. He also held the Sir George Watson chair of American history, literature and institutions in Great Britain. The constitution was then submitted to the people for ratification. It could then only be changed by another constitutional convention. Constitution Making in the States. British versus state constitutions. The British constitution was not a written document, but rather a collection of laws, customs, and precedents. American state constitutions were written charters. Contracts that defined powers of government. Grew out of colonial charters. Drew authority from the people, not the king. Represented fundamental law, superior to the whims of legislatures. In May 1785, a committee of Congress made a report recommending an alteration in the Articles of Confederation, but no action was taken on it, and it was left to the State Legislatures to proceed in the matter. The President informed Congress, on the 28th of January, 1790, that North Carolina had ratified the Constitution November 21, 1789; and he informed Congress on the 1st of June, 1790, that Rhode Island had ratified the Constitution May 29, 1790. Vermont, in convention, ratified the Constitution January 10, 1791, and was, by an act of Congress approved February 18, 1791, received and admitted into this Union as a new and entire member of the United States. The Constitution, the Articles, and Federalism: Crash Course US History #8. Birth of the US Constitution | US History | Khan Academy. The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. Constitution 101 | Lecture 1. American Revolution - Birth Of The Republic. Despite the public outcry against secrecy among its critics, the delegates continued in positions of public trust. State legislatures chose ten Convention delegates of their 33 total for the Articles Congress that September.[29]. Agenda.