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[1701]

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While the Declaration of Independence was under consideration in the Continental Congress, and before it was finally agreed upon, measures were taken for the establishment of a constitutional form of government; and on the 11th of June, 1776, it was "*Resolved,* That a committee be appointed to prepare and digest the form of a confederation to be entered into between these Colonies"; which committee was appointed the next day, June 12, and consisted of a member from each Colony, namely: Mr. Bartlett, Mr. S. Adams, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Sherman, Mr. R. R. Livingston, Mr. Dickinson, Mr. McKean, Mr. Stone, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Hewes, Mr. E. Rutledge, and Mr. Gwinnett. On the 12th of July, 1776, the committee reported a draft of the Articles of Confederation, which was printed for the use of the members under the strictest injunctions of secrecy.

This report underwent a thorough discussion in Congress, from time to time, until the 15th of November, 1777; on which day, "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union" were finally agreed to in form, and they were directed to be proposed to the legislatures of all the United States, and if approved by them, they were advised to authorize their delegates to ratify the same in the Congress of the United States; and in that event they were to become conclusive. On the 17th of November, 1777, the Congress agreed upon the form of a circular letter to accompany the Articles of Confederation, which concluded with a recommendation to each of the several legislatures "to invest its delegates with competent powers, ultimately, and in the name and behalf of the State, to subscribe articles of confederation and perpetual union of the United States, and to attend Congress for that purpose on or before the 10th day of March next." This letter was signed by the President of Congress and sent, with a copy of the articles, to each State legislature.

On the 26th of June, 1778, Congress agreed upon the form of a ratification of the Articles of Confederation, and directed a copy of the articles and the ratification to be engrossed on parchment; which, on the 9th of July, 1778, having been examined and the blanks filled, was signed by the delegates of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and South Carolina. Congress then directed that a circular letter be addressed to the States whose delegates were not present, or being present, conceived they were not authorized to sign the ratification, informing them how many and what States had ratified the Articles of Confederation, and desiring them, with all convenient dispatch, to authorize their delegates to ratify the same. Of these States,

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North Carolina ratified on the 21st and Georgia on the 24th of July, 1778; New Jersey on the 26th of November following; Delaware on the 5th of May, 1779; Maryland on the 1st of March, 1781; and on the 2d of March, 1781, Congress assembled under the new form of government.

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