

STORIES of New Jersey

The New Jersey plan presented by the State's delegates won support among the smaller states. It provided foremost for the equal vote in Congress of all States. It proposed increase of the powers of Congress, enabling it to raise funds by levying duties on imports at any port in the country, by postage and other stamps, and with power to regulate commerce among the States and with foreign countries. Congress was to elect the Federal Executive but the question was left to the delegates to decide whether this should be a president or a committee. Punishment of offenders against the Federal laws, however, was left to the State courts subject to an appeal to Federal judges.

The debates that followed showed the danger of a split that would divide the States into two or more unions--"wretched fragments of empire" as Washington wrote of it.

Paterson boldly declared that New Jersey would never join with other States on the Virginia plan. He would rather submit to a monarch, to a despot, than to see his State swallowed up.

In the end, the moderate counsel of Benjamin Franklin for a compromise was heeded. The United States Senate was formed under the New Jersey plan of equal representation for all the States, so that each, whether large or small, today has two Senators and two votes. The influence of the larger states, however, prevailed in the formation of the House of Representatives with its membership based on the population of each State.

New Jersey was the third state to ratify the new Federal Constitution, December 18, 1787.