

Luther Martin of Maryland

Adapted from the National Archives

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_founding_fathers_maryland.html

Background Information

At the Constitutional Convention Martin opposed the idea of a strong central government. When he arrived on June 9, 1787, he expressed suspicion of the secrecy rule imposed on the proceedings. He consistently sided with the small states and voted against the Virginia Plan. On June 27 Martin spoke for more than 3 hours in opposition to the Virginia Plan's proposal for proportionate representation in both houses of the legislature. Martin served on the committee formed to seek a compromise on representation, where he supported the case for equal numbers of delegates in at least one house. Before the convention closed, he and another Maryland delegate, John Francis Mercer, walked out.

Below Luther Martin debates the issue of the slave trade at the Constitutional Convention. This is taken from James Madison's notes:

Document

Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787

by James Madison

Tuesday, August 21

Mr. L. MARTIN, proposed to vary the Sect: 4. art VII. so as to allow a prohibition or tax on the importation of slaves. 1. [20] as five slaves are to be counted as 3 free men in the apportionment of Representatives; such a clause wd. leave an encouragement to this trafic. 2. [21] slaves weakened one part of the Union which the other parts were bound to protect: the privilege of importing them was therefore unreasonable. 3. [22] it was inconsistent with the principles of the revolution and dishonorable to the American character to have such a feature in the Constitution.