LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On the Albany Congress Plan of Union, 1754

THE EDITOR

The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography

In The Pennsylvania Magazine, January, 1950, Professor Lawrence H. Gipson has argued at length the case for a revisionist version of the origins of the famous Albany Congress Plan of Union (1754). He believes that the Congress Plan was probably a composite document, drawn partly from Franklin's "Short Hints," and partly from a suppositious Massachusetts plan, presumably by Thomas Hutchinson. The whole complex argument turns upon assumptions regarding the provenience (authorship and date) of one key document, the so-called "New England Plan" for a sectional and weak government solution of the problem of intercolonial union. A few bits of circumstantial evidence are offered to support the hypothesis that this was one of the "several" original projects which Franklin in his memoirs said were referred to the committee on union, and that it embodied Massachusetts objectives. But it so happens that the provenience of the "New England Plan" was determined as long ago as 1877 in a sense fatal to the hypothesis. It was a Connecticut scheme, drafted some months after the Congress adjourned. It was submitted to the Connecticut Assembly in October, 1754, as a substitute for the Albany Congress Plan.

Professor Gipson first formulated the "new version" in his admirable chapter on the Albany Congress in the fifth volume of The British Empire before the American Revolution (1942). At the time he had not yet examined the manuscript of the "New England Plan" in the Trumbull Papers (M.H.S.), I, 93 a-f, Connecticut State Library. Instead he cited the text printed in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections for 1800, first series, VII (1801). He was evidently misled by a phrase which the editors of the volume, the Rev. Abiel Holmes and the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, gratuitously added to the manuscript caption: "recommended by commissioners from several colonies, met in congress, at Albany, June 14, 1754." Editorial notes signed "A.H." and "J.M.," still visible in the manuscript though not recognized as such by Professor Gipson, show that they were thoroughly confused—that at first they believed they were printing the text of the Albany Plan itself. Abiel Holmes cleared up this particular misconception in his American Annals (1805), II, 201, but clung to the belief that the document was another project considered at Albany. In line with this assumption Holmes added in 1805 the second element in the myth. He
guessed that the author was "perhaps Mr. Hutchinson of Massachusetts." In the recent article more weight is given to this tradition than it deserves, in view of its origin; and the authority of Albert C. Bates, editor of the Fitch Papers, Connecticut Historical Society Collections, XVII (1918), xxviii, 20, is cited in its support. The first reference is to the Introduction, which was written not by Bates, but by Forrest Morgan. Bates himself referred to the tradition, but did not endorse it. In a footnote he suggested instead that both this plan and a shorter variant "New England Plan," which he also printed from another manuscript in the Trumbull Papers (M.H.S.), I, 94 a-d, were projects prepared in Connecticut before the Congress assembled to represent differing views of Connecticut parties. His hypothesis, not quite correct, was trembling on the verge of truth.

In The Pennsylvania Magazine article Professor Gipson develops his thesis of the composite character of the Albany Congress Plan more cautiously than in his history. He concedes that in its basic features—a continental union with large legislative and taxing powers—the Plan as offered to the assemblies followed Franklin's "Short Hints." But he argues that in form, in phrasing, and in some nine matters of detail it derived from the "New England Plan," still identified as a Massachusetts scheme; and upon these assumptions and arguments he draws his striking contrast of Franklin's and Hutchinson's statesmanship in 1754. He thinks the evidence conclusive against the only alternative hypothesis that he considers—that the "New England Plan" might have been a variant proposal framed in the course of the drafting process at Albany.

He candidly admits that other difficulties confront his preferred hypothesis and offers ingenious arguments to explain them away. One is the fact that Thomas Hutchinson himself twice explicitly confirmed Franklin's claim of authorship. Another is that the "New England Plan," of assumed Massachusetts origin, survives in Connecticut manuscripts. Both versions are in the handwriting of Jonathan Trumbull (Trumble), a member of the Connecticut council, but not one of the colony's commissioners at Albany. We are asked to assume that they are his "transcripts" of plans brought back from Albany by an unidentified Connecticut commissioner, made because Trumbull recognized their historical interest. Indeed, it is necessary to assume that one of them (I, 93) is a copy of a copy of the original Massachusetts project after it had been revised at Albany to incorporate provisions from Franklin's "Short Hints." The shorter manuscript (I, 94) is described as Trumbull's "transcript" of a derivative plan drawn up during the Congress by a Connecticut commissioner. It is not easy to follow the intricacies of the argument upon the filiations of these documents, two of them extant, the others suppositious. But it should be noted that this argument—and with it the whole hypothesis—can be maintained only upon the following conditions: (1) both Trumbull manuscripts must be regarded as transcripts; and (2) the longer manuscript (I, 93) must be regarded as earlier in date of composition than the shorter manuscript (I, 94).
Neither of these conditions is met when a fresh approach is made to the problem of provenience: that is, when all prior assumptions are set aside and the two contemporary manuscripts are subjected to the classic procedures of documentary analysis and criticism. (1) Both manuscripts are drafts, not transcripts. Both contain numerous corrections, interlineations, and revisions, all in the same hand. (2) A close collation of the two versions, even in the texts furnished in the tables annexed to the article (pp. 29-35), which are not true type-facsimiles, compels us to reverse the assumed order of composition. Both rhetorical analysis and comparison of content clearly demonstrate that the longer plan (I, 93) was a revision and elaboration of the shorter, incomplete sketch plan (I, 94). Two decisive items of evidence are omitted in the tables. In both drafts, as in the Albany Congress Plan on which they were based, [Par. IV] (p. 29) originally reads: “That within —— months after the passing” of the parliamentary enabling act, the representative assemblies should elect delegates to the Grand Council. In the longer draft (I, 93 a) the blank was later filled in with the word “six.” Again, the captions [Par. I] (p. 29) were at first identical in the two manuscripts. But in the expanded and revised draft (I, 93 a) Trumbull later drew a line through “and,” inserted a caret after “New York,” and above the line interpolated “& New Jersey.” Clearly the two manuscripts represent a continuing drafting process. The first sketch (I, 94) was set aside before it was completed. The second draft (I, 93) began as a copy, in part, of the sketch plan, but from the first contained substantial revisions, and was further expanded, corrected, and revised. This drafting process was away from, not toward, the Albany Congress Plan with its strong government provisions.

Study of the Hartford manuscripts confirms at every point the solution put forward by Charles J. Hoadly in his edition of The Public Records of Connecticut (1877), X, 293. Hoadly had read only the second draft as imperfectly printed in 1801. He ignored the misleading caption. He recognized the pertinence to the document of several passages in the Connecticut Assembly proceedings and papers of October, 1754. He offered no supporting evidence for his solution, which he buried in a footnote. Bates cited the note, but rejected the solution. Other students have overlooked it.

In October the Connecticut Assembly referred the Albany Congress Plan to a joint committee for report. The report was adverse; its criticisms were later embodied in revised form in the paper of “Reasons” adopted by the Assembly to justify rejection of the Albany union. But the committee, under the chairmanship of William Pitkin, former Albany commissioner, while opposing the Albany Plan, favored a limited union. Their report concluded, as only Hoadly has noted: “All which, with a draught for a union, delivered in herewith, is humbly submitted. . . .” The draft of the substitute plan, Hoadly recognized, was the “New England Plan” printed in 1801. Probably he reached this conclusion by observing that the five points of criticism of the Albany Plan in the report were implemented by just those
provisions of the "New England Plan" that embody its significant variations from the Congress proposals. (If space were available it would be possible to show that these correspondences between report and plan are too numerous to be explained as coincidence.) If Hoadly had searched farther afield for the manuscript of the plan—it was still in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society—he would have observed another clinching item of proof. The manuscript, we have seen, is in Trumbull's hand. Trumbull's name appears signed to the report. He was not only a member of the committee which submitted "a draught for a union," but he was evidently acting as the secretary or draftsman for the committee.

The "New England Plan," as Hoadly determined, was a later proposed Connecticut substitute, not an Albany Congress document. It reflected the fears and hesitations of that self-conscious, particularistic, republican colony, not the program of the Massachusetts delegation at Albany and surely not the statesmanship of Thomas Hutchinson.

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The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the contribution that Professor Crane has made to the discussion of the relationship of the two New England plans of union to the Albany Plan of Union. He has in this connection convinced me that I was in error when, in referring to the two New England plans, I wrote in a footnote of my article: "In appearance they are faithful transcripts, with deletions from and additions to the text in the handwriting of Trumbull, and made either from the originals, or, more likely, from copies of the two plans of union under discussion" (PMHB, LXXIV (1950), 7, Note 7). What I should have written, with photostats of the plans in manuscript before me, was: "In appearance the longer of the two plans would seem to be a transcription in the handwriting of Trumbull from a copy of the original, which was thereupon submitted to certain revisions also in his handwriting; the shorter plan, as it has survived also in his handwriting, shows, in addition, the process of recasting. Each, however, preserves certain distinctive and contrasting features despite the similarity in the wording and construction of the two."

Professor Crane has also emphasized the point that the two New England plans of union are associated in some manner at least with the work of the joint-committee of the Connecticut Assembly appointed to bring in a report on the Albany Plan of Union, in that the plans in question have survived, as already indicated, in the handwriting of Trumbull who was not only a member of the committee but, as the person who signed its report, presumably its secretary. In this connection, I should mention the fact that I sent to you—in order to make clear to the readers of the Magazine the nature of
the problem before me—photostats of portions of both of the plans of union for purposes of reproduction in connection with the article, but that you, unfortunately, were not able to include these by reason of expense.

To Professor Crane it is clear that in considering the relation of the two New England plans of union with the Albany Plan the weight of evidence points to the fact that, with the Albany Plan obviously before the committee of the Connecticut Assembly, it proceeded to draft from this plan of union another one more to its own liking; and then, for unknown reasons, discarded it and prepared a much more elaborate draft along lines in some respects strikingly divergent from it, which, he is persuaded, was the plan of union that was actually submitted to the Assembly with its report. In other words, the shorter New England plan of union was drafted subsequent to the framing of the Albany Plan and was based upon it, just as the longer New England plan was based upon the shorter plan. What adds weight to this position is the fact that the New England plans are in the handwriting of Trumbull and that the interlineations on the manuscript of the more elaborate plan, also in his hand, manifestly move away from similarities in the text with that of the shorter plan, as is quite evident from the most superficial examination of the manuscripts. The shorter plan also gives evidence of recasting or redrafting. Here we have then, from Professor Crane’s point of view, an easy and definite solution of the problem of the relations of the two New England plans of union to the Albany Plan. The hypothesis set forth in my paper on “Thomas Hutchinson and the Albany Plan of Union” would reverse the sequence of this order.

Before turning to re-examine this problem that is before us, I should like to make clear that in undertaking the writing of the article I sought to keep in mind the fact that in attempting to reconstruct the history of the background of the Albany Plan of Union it was imperative to take into account not only direct evidence, but also that which is indirect in nature, since I have found in my writing that sometimes one is as important as the other, and that to neglect either category of evidence is to run the risk of grave historical distortion. Further, it seemed to me that only in strict observance of two great canons of historical reconstruction could I feel assured that the hypothesis that I set forth both in my book and in the article would possess any permanent significance. One of these canons involves the principle that in arriving at an acceptable interpretation of the facts of history and with it a sound solution of any historical problem at least two things must be kept constantly in view by the student: he should neither do violence to any fact nor ignore it, if it is pertinent. The other canon involves the principle that as between two hypotheses relating to the solution of a historical problem, that one which most nearly brings under scrutiny and reconciles all pertinent facts without doing violence to any of them is apt to be more in accord with reality than one which leaves out of account many such facts and therefore leaves them unreconciled with facts that have been selected for consideration.
One of the chief weaknesses of Professor Crane's hypothesis as to the relations of the two New England plans to the Albany Plan, as I see it, lies in the necessity that he is under, in order to give it credibility, to brush aside as irrelevant a large number of facts that I myself have long been persuaded have a most vital bearing on the problem and which were therefore presented in some detail, especially in my article. Also, in order to establish this hypothesis he is obliged to assume that the committee of the Connecticut Assembly appointed to report on the Albany Plan of Union considered that one of its chief duties was to provide some alternate plan if it found itself opposed to the Albany Plan.

The "bill," authorizing the appointment of a joint-committee of the two houses (Connecticut Archives, Colonial War, 5:69, State Library) called on this body

to take into their Consideration y* part of his Hon* y* Gov* Speech at y* Opening of this Assembly Relating to y* Proposed Plan of Union therein mentioned and Report their Opinion with y* Reasons [;] therefore w* Measures may be proper for this Assembly to come into . . . Relating to the Premisses [sic].

The records of the proceedings of the Assembly (Conn. Col. Rec., X, 292-294) set forth in three resolutions the results of the work of the committee in presenting not only the "Reasons" why the Albany Plan was not acceptable, but the "Measures" that should be pursued against it. The "Reasons," as presented by the committee, are also in printed form as well as the more formal "Reasons" adopted by the Assembly (Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll., VII, 207-214). The report on the "Measures" to be taken is made clear in the last two of the three resolutions referred to above. One of the latter called on the Governor to instruct the Connecticut London Agent to oppose any move on the part of Parliament to implement the Albany Plan of Union; the other further requested the Governor to use such means as he would judge prudent to prevent any other colony from making application to Parliament in favor of the Plan. Nowhere do I find the slightest evidence that the joint-committee was expected to take or took into serious consideration a substitute plan of union. In other words, it would seem to appear that this body very properly gave its attention to the "Reasons" and "Measures" for opposing the Albany Plan and then, almost as an afterthought, decided to send to the Assembly a "draught of union."

Had the committee, in other words, put forth the really serious effort in drafting plans of union—more acceptable than the Albany Plan—attributed to it by Professor Crane, and had it, in this process actually evolved and then discarded a plan that was much more nearly in harmony with the political conceptions of the people of Connecticut in favor of one in some respects totally out of keeping with these conceptions, one might have anticipated that some explanation of this strange conduct would have been embodied in the report.
Indeed, after studying the history of the political reactions of the people of Connecticut in the eighteenth century for a great many years, I am more than doubtful that such men as Pitkin and Trumbull would have sent to the Assembly for serious consideration the extended New England plan of union as one more likely to find acceptance within the Assembly than the shorter one. Moreover, Professor Crane offers no proof that the "draught of union" sent to the Assembly was the longer plan, but assumes that this was the case. Reasons can be advanced against this premise.

If the Assembly found the Albany Plan objectionable, as it did, it is not likely that its members with their latent republicanism would have been at all pleased with a scheme of union for New England and New York, with New Jersey later added, that would give the high office of President General, with the command of the troops of the union and with the enjoyment of a casting vote in the Grand Council, to whomever happened to be the royal Governor of Massachusetts Bay, bringing with it the permanent establishment of the administrative center of the union in Boston. For not only did Connecticut show a consistent hostility to the extension of royal authority within the colony in the eighteenth century, but the additional fact must not be ignored, that there was at the period under consideration a very real issue between it and Massachusetts Bay involving not only the boundary between the two colonies, but the fate of a number of flourishing towns.

To me a much more logical explanation of whatever took place in the committee of the Assembly, and one more nearly in harmony with all pertinent available facts having to do with the relationship of the two New England plans of Union with the Albany Plan, is to assume that William Pitkin, as a Connecticut Commissioner to the Albany Congress and the Connecticut representative on the Congress Committee on a Union, brought from Albany not only a copy of the Albany Plan, but two other plans of union; that, as chairman of the joint-committee set up to report on the Albany Plan, he turned these plans over to Trumbull and at the same time requested the latter as secretary of the committee to make transcripts of them; that in performing this service Trumbull not only introduced, doubtless on advice, certain revisions in the longer plan, but at certain points recast the shorter plan; that this work was undertaken so that in case the Assembly showed an inclination to favor some more limited project of union as a substitute for the Albany Plan, there would be on hand at least two contrasting proposals, each of which had enjoyed a measure of support at Albany; and, finally, that in submitting its report, the committee decided to send to the Assembly, without any recommendations for action, a fair copy of one of the plans, doubtless the shorter plan, as one that was in conformity with the approach to the problem of a colonial union of the Connecticut Commissioners while at Albany.

The above interpretation of the sequence of events is based upon the view that the weight of evidence points to the fact that the longer New
England plan had its origin neither in Connecticut at the hands of a committee of the Assembly nor after the conclusion of the Albany Congress, but rather in Massachusetts Bay both before the meeting of that Congress and the drafting of the shorter New England plan, and was apparently the work of Thomas Hutchinson. This conclusion is reached by the following line of reasoning based upon data, none of which, I am persuaded, can be safely brushed aside in dealing with the problem in hand.

1. The Province of Massachusetts Bay was the only colony represented at the Albany Congress committed by its Assembly in advance to the idea of a colonial union, and the only colony in line with this that instructed its Commissioners to the Congress to work for “a firm and perpetual union & confederacy” (Mass. Archives, 4:468–69, State House).

2. In view of the clear instructions given by the Council on April 18 to the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners—approved by the House of Representatives the following day—there is the strongest sort of presumption that at least one of the Commissioners was called upon to work out some plan of union in harmony with these instructions.

3. Among the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners the only one who seems to have had any sustained zeal for a union of the northern colonies or for any type of union and also the only one who upon his return to Boston after the Congress sought to persuade the Assembly to adopt some plan for a union of the more northern colonies was Thomas Hutchinson—as I have made clear in the chapter on “The Fate of the Plan of Union” in Volume V of my series. Whatever proposals for a union the Commissioners brought with them to Albany would seem, therefore, to have been given formulation by Hutchinson. The fact that he was designated to act as the representative of the Province on the Albany Committee on a Union only gives emphasis to this point. With two months in which to make preparations for carrying out the request of the Assembly, there was abundance of leisure in which to formulate in detail a finished plan for “a firm and perpetual union & confederacy,” and Hutchinson was not the type of man to neglect a public duty of such importance. That he never in his writings acknowledged an interest in any plan for an American union does not alter the fact of that profound interest in it in the year 1754; and that he more than willingly gave Franklin the fullest credit for the Albany Plan of Union, embracing Franklin’s own ideas rather than his own, also is perhaps not surprising in view of his peculiar situation, as I have already pointed out in the chapter just mentioned.

4. There has survived among the Jonathan Trumbull Papers and in Trumbull’s handwriting the draft of a plan of union, which, stripped of the interlineations and revisions introduced into it, also in the
handwriting of Trumbull, fully corresponds to the major ideas that
the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners—not the Connecticut Com-
mmissioners—advanced at the Congress respecting the type of union
they sought to bring to realization before they were persuaded to
change their views in the course of the proceedings of the Congress.
What were their major ideas? First of all, according to the testimony
of Lieutenant Governor de Lancey, who attended the Congress, they
wanted to combine the office of President General of the Union with
that of Governor of Massachusetts Bay. Again, they endeavored to
create two unions rather than one, as they themselves reported on
their return home (Mass. Archives, 4:463). These two features are the
outstanding characteristics of the longer of the two New England
plans as against the shorter plan.

5. The plan in question, freed of its interlineations and revisions, also
shows the influence of Benjamin Franklin's "Short Hints." This
would imply—in identifying it with the one that there is reason to
believe the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners brought to Albany—
that the project must have been early submitted to revision, but not
to the extent of altering any of the basic objectives that the delega-
tion had in mind. In fact, the idea of calling the Council of the Union,
the Grand Council, as it is so denominated in the "Short Hints,"
would doubtless have appealed strongly to such a person as Hutchin-
son, and would have been without the slightest reluctance incor-
porated into any draft of union that he had had any part in preparing.

6. That Franklin's "Short Hints" was not the only plan of union sub-
mitted to the Congress as soon as it had once organized for business is
indicated both by the "Journal" of the Congress, which voted for a
committee "to prepare and receive Plans or Schemes for the Union
of the Colonies, and to digest them into one general plan for the
inspection of this Board" (N.Y. Col. Doc. VI, 860), and by Franklin
himself, who in his "Autobiography" (A. H. Smyth, Writings of
Franklin, I, 387) stated, in referring to his own project for a union,
that

several of the commissioners had form'd plans of the same kind. . . . A
committee was then appointed . . . to consider the several plans and report.

Thus, there were, if Franklin is correct, "several" plans submitted.
In light of their precise instructions, it would be a matter of the
greatest surprise had not the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners sub-
mitted to the consideration of the Committee on a Union not only one
of the "several" plans, but the draft of one worked out with great
care and in detail. It would appear that this provided for the creation
of a "General Government" rather than a "Union." At least the copy
of the draft of the longer New England plan that has survived has
the word “Government” in the text, which is true also of the shorter plan. But in the longer plan it is crossed out and the word “Union” is substituted, which would indicate the influence on the committee of the Connecticut Assembly of the Albany Plan—where the word “Union” is preferred—in revising the longer plan.

7. But were one to accept as a fact that both Franklin’s “Short Hints” and a Massachusetts Bay plan were submitted to the consideration of the Congress, the two would not make “several.” We may likewise venture to include the complex proposals of the Rev. Richard Peters of Pennsylvania. It also seems quite likely that at least the rough draft of a fourth plan was submitted. Indeed, it may be argued with a good deal of confidence that the Massachusetts Bay delegation sought at the earliest opportunity to persuade the one from Connecticut to support the type of union that we know it favored. That it went out energetically to win approval is indicated by de Lancey’s complaint (New-York Hist. Soc. Coll., V (1830), 185) that at the Congress Massachusetts acted with the aim to procure the President’s chair for their Governor. . . .

It would seem logical to assume that in so acting the Connecticut Commissioners on being approached were either given a copy of the Massachusetts Bay proposals or were permitted to make a copy for their consideration. It would also seem equally logical that insofar as objections were found to the Massachusetts Bay project on the part of the Connecticut delegation, it would have been modified to conform more nearly to the sort of union that the people of the colony might under the given circumstance approve.

8. It is clear that the Connecticut Commissioners had ideas of their own regarding a union. We know that they voiced strong objections to the Franklin conception of the sort of American confederation that should be formed. In fact, the aggressiveness of the Connecticut Commissioners while at Albany was emphasized by the Assembly in its “Reasons Considered . . . Concerning the [Albany] Plan of Union” (Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll., VII, 213). In explaining the basis of opposition to the Albany Plan of Union the following statement appears:

For these reasons, more largely insisted on and discoursed at the congress of the commissioners in Albany. . . The gentlemen who went [as] commissioners from the colony of Connecticut, objected to the proposed plan; and thought they were never answered or obviated, and therefore never came into or gave any consent to the same.

9. Both Professor Crane and I are agreed that some time in the year 1754 a plan of union was drafted by some Connecticut group—he would insist that this group drafted in its original form not only the shorter, but the longer New England plan. A plan of union has
survived in Trumbull's handwriting that is closely related to the longer New England plan of union both in construction and style. It, however, eliminates the chief features that characterized, are known as a fact to be, the sort of colonial union that the Massachusetts Bay Commissioners sought to bring to realization during the early deliberations of the Congress—namely, the definite proposal for two American unions and the combination of the office of President General with that of Governor of Massachusetts Bay. It would appear that this shorter plan, stripped of its interlineations and revisions in the form in which it has survived, embodied the views respecting a union that the Connecticut Commissioners held while at the Congress, and it is not unreasonable to assume that these ideas were given some rather definite form by the delegation.

10. Both Professor Crane and I are likewise in agreement that the group responsible for giving expression to the "Reasons" was the group that was responsible for whatever "draught of union" was actually projected by Connecticut. The quotation given above from the proceedings of the Connecticut Assembly would indicate that the "Reasons" were formulated and set forth very fully first at Albany. One may argue, therefore, with confidence that Pitkin and his associates also sketched out at least roughly the heads of a plan of union. It was there that all the Commissioners were deeply involved in discussions regarding the question of colonial union, and it would indeed be remarkable if the leader of the Connecticut delegation and a member of the Congress Committee on a Union had had no project to present and, in fact, had been so void of constructive ideas while there that only upon his return to the colony with the Albany Plan of Union was he, as chairman of the committee of the Assembly, able to assist in evolving some plan at a time when it was neither requested of the committee by the Assembly nor, when submitted, given the slightest consideration by the latter body. Indeed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion, with all relevant facts before one, that the actual work of the committee was largely perfunctory, pro forma, in nature, in that it manifestly only placed in formal shape the arguments already voiced in the Congress against the Franklin plan which were reinforced, it would seem most likely, by some counterplan evolved by the Connecticut Commissioners. I therefore still incline to the view that we may reasonably include among the "several" plans presented to the Congress early in its deliberations one from Connecticut, based largely, as I have already suggested, on a detailed draft of union projected by Massachusetts Bay.

The above attempt at historical reconstruction of the past points to the existence, by the time that the Albany Congress had organized and was ready to turn to a consideration of the important matter of an intercolonial
union, of at least four plans: Franklin's "Short Hints," the strikingly divergent Peter's project, a highly finished plan sponsored by the Massachusetts Bay delegation and doubtless the work of Hutchinson, and, finally, one hastily drawn but derived from it and following it in most respects in the matter of language and style, but much more in harmony with the Connecticut outlook on any movement in the direction of a union.

Moreover, if one were to assume the existence of these plans prior to the formulation of the Albany Plan it would make explicable what otherwise we must believe was Franklin's almost miraculous transformation of the rough "Short Hints" within a period of some two days—between June 29 and July 1—into the maturely drafted project of union that, after additional discussion, was finally approved by the Congress on July 5. For by using as a model what may be conjectured to have been a carefully prepared Massachusetts Bay plan his labors would certainly have been enormously lightened. This in itself reflects no discredit on the great American, as his committee was under the injunction by the Congress "to digest" the various projects placed before it into a final proposal for a union. Nor would this, if it happened, be an isolated example of the use that Franklin made of the talents of others, as is indicated by the claim put forth by Baron Francis Maseres of the Inner Temple, that the pamphlet *The Interest of Great Britain Considered, With Regard to her Colonies...* (1760), attributed to Franklin, was for the most part actually written by his own friend Richard Jackson also of Inner Temple (Carl Van Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson, 1753–1785* [Philadelphia, 1947], 10–13).

The interpretation of events leading up to the framing of the Albany Plan of Union just given rests on facts and assumptions that are in harmony with them. It has the merit that in no way does it, I believe, distort any of these facts nor does it ignore any that are pertinent, and therefore meets the demands of one of the great canons of historical reconstruction. On the other hand, if Professor Crane's conclusions are accepted, one is presented with the unprecedented spectacle of a joint-committee of the Connecticut Assembly, composed of some of the most prominent leaders in the colony, busying themselves with the proposal that their Assembly make "humble application" for an "Act of the Parliament of Great Brittain" that would create a union of all the colonies to the north of Pennsylvania based upon a plan, that they themselves alone brought into existence, which would permanently identify the great office of President General—who was likewise to be "The General or Chief Commander" of all the forces of the union—with that of the royal Governor of Massachusetts Bay, whoever he was or whatever was the nature of his qualifications.

As for myself, I simply cannot accept the idea that those hard-headed Connecticut realists, such as made up the committee of the Assembly, would actually have shown more zeal to enhance the power and prestige of the Governor of Massachusetts Bay throughout New England and beyond
than was shown even by the leaders of the latter colony by doing something on their own initiative that Hutchinson and his colleagues, before the Congress got down to business, either neglected to do or were unable to do. Indeed, years ago I rejected this plausible solution of the problem of the origin of the longer New England plan as quite unrealistic.

Before closing my letter I must refer again to the second great canon of historical reconstruction—that in evaluating two contrasting hypotheses, the one that most nearly brings into view and reconciles all pertinent known facts without doing violence to any of them is much more likely to be solidly based than one that leaves out of account many such facts and leaves them unreconciled with others that have been selected for attention. Whether Professor Crane's hypothesis, with its assumptions, more nearly measures up to this exacting standard than my own, with its corresponding assumptions, I must leave to the judgment of other scholars. In doing so, may I not at the same time express the hope that some of them will seek the opportunity and find the means to throw additional light on the problem that has been considered both in my book and in my article and in the letters by Professor Crane and myself?

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