The Great Compromise (1789)

The Great Compromise also known as the Connecticut Compromise was established in 1787. This compromise was made to separate the powers of government. It was a combination of the New Jersey Plan which involves all states to have equal representation, and the Virginia Plan which favored representation based on population. Roger Sherman proposed this compromise to the Conventional Congress. This compromise made it so there are two houses, one with representatives based of population called the House of Representatives. The other house, the Senate, was the upper house that gave each state two representatives.

The founding fathers of our country, Alexander Hamilton, Ben Franklin, and George Washington, never wanted the states to have equal representation, and they rejected the plan for almost two weeks.

“The delegates in Philadelphia debated for the whole hot summer of 1787. . . . The first question of major importance was the matter of representation. . . . Finally Roger Sherman, William Samuel Johnson, and Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut suggested the Connecticut Compromise. Like many other ideas that have made history, it was remarkably simple. Why not divide the Congress into two houses? . . . Quite appropriately this came to be called the Great Compromise. For it broke the deadlock and made it possible for the large states and small states to work together.” (Boorstin, Kelley 118)

“One of the sharpest debates concerned the plans for a congress, or national legislature. The desire of each state to protect itself from the tyranny of others complicated settlement of the issue. . . . The main subject of debate, however, was proportional representation. . . . The Great Compromise tried to satisfy both sides in the dispute over representation. Its acceptance by the delegates marked a turning point. . . . Although the Great Compromise settled one debate, it fueled another. In determining the number of representatives each state should have in the House, should slaves be counted.” (Davidson, Lytle 160-161)

“The New Jersey Plan, at a cursory glance proposed a relatively strong national government but left more power to the states than the Virginia plan did. According to Max Farrand, editor of The Records of the Federal Convention of the 1787, it ‘more nearly represented what most delegates supposed they were sent to do.’ But because the interest of the men who worked it out were so diverse, it was filled with loopholes and exception intended to satisfy one or another of the small states’ men, and there is some doubt as to whether it would have worked in practice. John O’connor has suggested it was a mere stalking-horse for equal voting in congress. We should think of it, then, as a compact hastily thrown together to give the same states a base for the fight a standard around which the opponents of proportional representation could gather. (Collier 108)

“Moreover, the constitution established a rule of law born specifically of the Great Compromise, a compromise between the centrists and the localists, between the men of order and the men of liberty, between those who sought a uniform system of laws and
those who sought the greatest possible self-rule, between those who appealed to the ultimate good of justice and who appealed to the ultimate good of liberty. … The Great Compromised did not silence debate on these great issues for all times…. The American Civil War would be fought over the very issue – whether central or local power was supreme – that had provoked the Constitutional Convention to begin with….The Great Compromised that these men finally settled on a placed at the center of the nation’s life….And it embraced the two aspirations under a more general and grander principle that rose naturally from the political culture they shared….” (Mee 305-306)
WORKS CITED


