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Title: Letter from Roger B. Taney to Unknown Recipient

Date: May 8, 1829

Location: I-Friends-2000-1

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Baltimore May 8. 1829

My Dear Sir

I am sorry it was not in my power to reply to your letter by the mail of yesterday - and I write now in order that I may assuage myself of any private conveyance to Annapolis that may offer between now and Monday -

Under present circumstances I have come to the conclusion that it is best not to write to the President at this time. - You have heard how the convention resulted. Such a communication as we spoke of, either oral or written might in the present state of things be liable to the suspicion of arising out of feelings of disappointment and irritation - and indeed while your application is pending might be regarded as designed merely to subserve that particular purpose. Whatever therefore it may be proper to do hereafter, it seems to me that no good would be likely to result from an application of Gen. Smith's motives made at this time. - and

besides I believe that Gen. Jackson will soon understand him as he is not apt to be deceived in his knowledge of men.

I perceive no advantage in your returning to Washington until you know that you will meet Mr. Ingham. - For he is certainly the best judge of the course proper for you to take, and from his situation & wishes in your favour his opinion should I think govern your conduct. - Your other friends are acting necessarily on conjectures and inferences which might lead them into mistakes.

The elements of discord I am sorry to find are daily growing stronger in the Jackson party in Maryland. - It happened unfortunately that the greater part of the first appointments made in this state belonged to ^{Mr. Ingham's} ~~his~~ Department - And he has not only allowed himself to entertain unworthy & offensive suspicions of Federal gentlemen in Maryland but he has I fear ~~to~~ suffered this weakness to be discovered by those who were ready to take advantage of it. - And feeling themselves countenanced by him, it is manifest that a simultaneous effort is to be made all over the State to put aside the Jackson Federalists & revive old party distinctions.

I have letters from Frederick telling me that
the same game is playing in that quarter and
that Frank Thomas whose services in the cause
are beyond all praise, is now denounced as a
Federalist. - I find upon it this would never have
been ventured if it had not been thought that
the Government are prepared to support it. - Yet
I have the most unshaken confidence in the
President, and feel satisfied from all that I now
hear (I have heard a great deal) that Mr. Ingham
is the only one of the Cabinet who has in the slightest
degree
countenanced this gross injustice. - And I am persuaded
that before long those who are now busy in ruining
old party distinctions, will find it convenient to
retreat their steps. - At present however they are
full of mischief - for they prevent arrangement
for our fall elections & I begin to fear that the
issue of the contest for the State is not so safe
as I supposed it to be when I last saw you. -

With best wishes for your success

I am Dr. Sir M. B. Truly yours

R. B. Taney

PROFILES

IN HISTORY

TANEY, ROGER BROOKE. 1777-1864. American jurist. Taney's name is closely associated with the decision in the Dred Scott case (1857). [Dred Scott (1795?-1858), an American Negro born to slave parents, was the central figure in the Dred Scott v. Sanford case, inaugurated by his suit (1848) to obtain his freedom on the grounds that he had resided in free territory. In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court held that he was not a citizen and not entitled to any standing in court. It further declared that Congress never had the authority to ban slavery from the territories (in effect stating that the 1820 Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional), that Congress could not prohibit a citizen of any state from carrying slaves or other property into any territory, and that Congress could not impair the constitutional protection of such slaves or property in the territory.] Served as U.S. Attorney General (1831-33) under President Andrew Jackson, and was the advisor to him in the Bank of the United States contest. Also appointed Secretary of the Treasury (September, 1833) by Jackson during a congressional recess, and served for nine months, though his appointment was not confirmed by the U.S. Senate (June 24, 1834). His nomination for Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, was also rejected by the Senate. Then he was nominated (December 28, 1835) and confirmed (March 15, 1836) as Chief Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, succeeding John Marshall; he immediately began to change the tenor of the Court by reversing the earlier trend toward strong centralization of government powers. Due to his decision in the Dred Scott case, the prestige of the Court dropped sharply. He died in 1864, publicly unlamented.

In the first weeks of Andrew Jackson's presidency, future Secretary of the Treasury and Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney comments on "the General's" Cabinet appointments

TANEY, ROGER B. Autograph Letter Signed, Three pages, Quarto, dated May 8, 1829 from Baltimore. Written to an unknown correspondent. Taney pens (in full):

"My Dear Sir

I am sorry it was not in my power to reply to your letter by the mail of yesterday – and I write now in order that I may avail myself of any private conveyance to Annapolis that may offer between now and Monday –

Under present circumstances as I have come to the conclusion that it is best not to write to the President at this time. You have heard how the convention resulted. Such a communication as we spoke of, either oral or written might in the present state of things be liable to the suspicion of arising out of feelings of disappointment and irritative – and indeed while your application is pending might be regarded as designed merely to subserve that particular purpose. Whatever therefore it may be proper to do hereafter, it seems to me that no good would be likely to result from an explanation of Gen. Smith's motives made at this time. And besides I believe that Gen. Jackson will soon understand him as he is not apt to be deceived in his knowledge of men.

I perceive no advantage in your returning to Washington until you know that you will meet Mr. [Samuel D.] Ingham [Secretary of the Treasury]. For he is certainly the best judge of the course proper for you to take, and from his situation & wishes in your favour his opinion should I think govern your conduct. Your other friends are acting necessarily on conjectures and inferences which might lead them into mistakes.

PROFILES

IN HISTORY

The elements of discord I am sorry to find are daily growing ^{stranger} in the Jackson party in Maryland. It happened unfortunately that the greater part of the first appointment made in this state belonged to Mr. Ingham's department – And he has not only allowed himself to entertain unworthy & offensive suspicions of Federal gentlemen in Maryland but he has I fear suffered this weakness to be discovered by those who were ready to take advantage of it. And feeling themselves counteracted by him, it is manifest that a Simultaneous effort is to be made all over the State to put aside the Jackson Federalists & revive old party distractions. I have letters from Frederick telling me that the same game is playing in that quarter and that Frank Thomas whose services in the cause are beyond all praise, is now denounced as a Federalist – Depend upon it this would never have been ventured if it had not been thought that the Government are prepared to support it. Yet I have the most unshaken confidence in the President, and feel satisfied from all that I have heard (& I have heard a great deal) that Mr. Ingham is the only one of the Cabinet who has in the slightest sense countenanced this gross injustice. And I am persuaded that before long those who are now busy in revising its party distinctions will find it convenient to retrace their steps. At present however they are full of mischief – for they prevent arrangements for our fall elections & I begin to fear that the issue of the contest for the state is not so safe as I supposed it to be when I last saw you.

With best wishes for your success,

I am Dr. sir most truly yours

R.B. Taney”

In the weeks following his triumphant inauguration as the “People’s President”, Andrew Jackson set out to sweep corruption from the bureaucracy by making numerous appointments and removing many unworthy men from office. Immediately, Senator Marcy cried foul, in that Jackson would instead be constructing a new “spoils” system. However, Jackson only replaced about 1 in 10 men, restoring the people’s confidence in their government.

An nice political letter from the man who would soon be Secretary of the Treasury himself. In very fine condition. (#22753)