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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from William Bingham to Benjamin Rush

**Date:** November 10, 1784

**Location:** I-SpahrB-undated-20

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Paris Novem 10th 1784

My dear Sir

Your Letter of the 23 August conveys Intelligence of a very unpleasant & unexpected Nation; — I always flattered myself with an Assurance of a Convention taking place, & with the Prospect of an entire Change in the defective Parts of the Constitution; — The Account of your Misfortune in this Attempt, has really afflicted me —

Admitting with you, that the Commerce of the State, with all its Dependence, may continue to arrange itself under the Standard of the Republican Party, — may there not be any Interest still more formidable, because more numerous, to oppose it? — I mean the Country Party, which compose such a great Majority of the Legislature

You may be well assured, that every Effort of your Antagonists will be employed, to gain Strength in that Quarter, — by creating new Prejudices in the Minds of that Class, of Character, by fostering those Jealousies that they already entertain — And their relative Situation with the trading Part of the Commerce

Yours truly,  
J. D. A.

Community, unfortunately occasions them to be too  
susceptible of such Impressions; — From  
Occurrences that have recently taken place, I  
am fearfull, that our Opponents have been too  
successfull in their Attempts.

When was that Energy & Activity of  
Character, that formerly distinguished our  
Friends at an Election, when they suffered two  
such obnoxious & dangerous Persons to be return-  
ed — one for an Assemblyman, & the other for Sen-  
-ator? — Your Discomfure on this  
Occasion, is calculated to injure your Party in the  
attachment of some of its Friends; — for, separately  
considered from the Influence which these two  
Men will support in a popular Assembly — this  
very circumstance of a declining Cause, will always  
tend to alienate certain Characters, (composed of  
Soft & flimsy Materials) whose Attachment is only  
in proportion to the Appearance of Success.

Those who have observed the progressive  
State of Parties in popular Governments, their  
alternate Ebbs & Flows, are but too well convinced  
of the Truth of these humiliating Remarks —

You flatter yourself that the Repeal of  
the Test Law will add one third of the Votes of Penn-  
-sylvania to your Strength; — I wish for  
-verly wish you may not be mistaken; — at  
any Rate, you should not place too much  
Reliance on this Expectation.

For,  
consider

consider, that a Politician, in order to gain his  
Points, becomes all things to all Men — and  
however characterized the opposite Party may have  
been for a persecuting Spirit during the War, &  
however obnoxious they may have been in Con-  
sequence thereof, they will probably now assume  
a gentleness & Moderation in their Politics, even  
beyond what the Son of good Government  
requires — Recollect, as

a case in point, the unnatural Coalition, that lately  
took place, for the purpose of opposing the National  
Bank, & the Motives that occasioned it —  
Nothing is so unwholesome a popular Opinion  
in regard to particular Points of Politics, & in no  
Instance does the Weakness, & often times the Depravity  
of human Nature, so evidently appear, as in  
the constant Revolutions, that it undergoes.

The Bulk of Mankind in large Societies  
are generally led by the sentiments of others, &  
those who have the most Skill & Adroitness,  
in furnishing Arguments ad captandem  
vulger, succeed the best — Unfortunately  
the greatest Purity & Rectitude of Intention  
will not be sufficient, without Recourse to this  
left handed Wisdom.

I have been an attentive  
Witness to two general Elections in England,  
& have made many Reflections on the subject,  
which I should be happy to see turned to  
proper Account by our Friends in Penn-  
sylvania.

But I am afraid, that too general  
an Apathy

an Apathy has taken place amongst the leading  
Characters of the Republican Party; — Remember  
the Fable of the Hare of the Tortoise — Perseve-  
-rance will effect wonders — Too great a  
Reliance on the Goodness of a Cause creates an  
Indolence, which often proves fatal to it —

Recalled the usual Efforts of disappoint-  
-ed Ambition; — You have forced a Set of  
People from the just Paths of Honor & Condemnment  
in the State; — whilst there is a Glimpse of  
Hope to animate them, they will make  
unceasing Struggles to recover their former  
Situation, & they will never consider them-  
-selves fallen, untill like Lucifer, they are  
seen never to rise again — When I  
left my Country, I thought this happy  
Event had arrived, & that like old Simeon,  
I might depart in Peace; — but I now  
find that we are not to be redeemed at so  
easy a Rate, & that we have still to work  
out our political Salvation; — & not without  
some Fear & Trembling —

Altho deprived of the opportunity of  
contributing by personal Efforts, you have my  
most ardent Wishes for Success — I am  
convinced that our Country will be never great  
or respectable, without some important Changes  
in our Constitution, which the Republicans  
alone are inclined to have effected; — No

personal

No personal Consideration has weight with me; - for it is a Matter of perfect Indifference who fill the places of public Trust, provided they are honest Men, whose Talents denote their Designation - for the Experience of every Day convinces me of the Vanity, & Vexation of Spirit, that attends public Life -

I have made a delightful Tour thro' some of the Northern Parts of Europe, - thro' Holland, part of Germany, & Flanders; - My Situation here is perfectly agreeable, - allowing the utile dulci in all my Pursuits; for the Country surpasses them in all the Improvements of the Arts & Sciences; - nor has any People carried the Enjoyment of social Pleasure to so high a State of Perfection -

I am peculiarly fortunate in my Acquaintance, which lay amongst the first Class of Characters in the Country - Many Persons are surpris'd, that with an ample Fortune, sufficient to supply the full Extent of my Desires in Europe, I should still incline to return to America - but these People are but little acquainted with that Amour Patrie, that distinguishes the American Character -

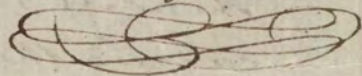
Berlin,

my self

Besides, my Life has hitherto been so much engaged in the tumultuous Scenes of Business & Pleasure, that I have not had an opportunity of indulging my favorite Enjoyment, which is Retirement & Books; — I anticipate the Moments with heartfelt Satisfaction, that I shall devote to such Pursuits, & I find no Prospect of doing it until my Return to America.

With my best Compliments, & those of Mr Bingham to the Rest, believe me to be Sincerely

Yours obed<sup>t</sup> Slave  
Wm Bingham



Doctor Rush

Philadelphia

162  
Wm Bingham  
Novemb: 8. 1784



My dear Sir/

Your Letter of the 23<sup>d</sup> August conveys Intelligence of a very unpleasing & unexpected Nature; - I always flattered myself with an assurance of a Convention taking place, & with the Prospect of an entire Change in the defective Parts of the Constitution; - The Account of your Miscarriage in this Attempt has really afflicted me -

Admitting with you, that, the Commerce of the State, with all its Dependencies, may continue to arrange itself under the Standard of the Republican Party, - may there not be an Interest Still more formidable, because more numerous, to oppose it? - I mean the Country Party, which composes Such a great Majority of the Legislature.

You may be well assured, that every Effort of your Antagonists will be employed, to gain Strength in that Quarter; - by creating new Prejudices in the Minds of that Class of Character, & by fostering those Jealousies that they already entertain - And their relative Situation with the trading Part of the Community, unfortunately occasions them to be too Susceptible of Such Impressions; - From Occurrences that have recently taken place, I am fearfull, that our Opponents have been too successfull in their Attempts -

Where was that Energy & Activity of Character, that formerly distinguished our Friends at an Election, when they Suffered two Such obnoxious & dangerous Persons to be returned - one for Assemblyman, & the other for Censor? - Your Discomfiture on this Occasion, is calculated to injure your Party in the Attachment of Some of its friends; - for, Seperately considered from the Influence which these two Men will Support in a popular Assembly, - this very Circumstance of a declining Course, will always tend to alienate certain Characters, (composed of flimsy Materials) whose Attachment is only in proportion to the Assurance of Success -

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You flatter yourself that the Repeal of the Test Law will add one third of the Votes of Pennsylvania to your Strength; - I most fervently wish you may not be mistaken; - At any Rate, you Should not place too much Reliance on this Expectation - For, consider, that a Politician, in order to gain his Points, becomes all things to all Men - And however characterized the opposite Party may have been for a persecuting Spirit during the War, & however obnoxious they may have been in Consequence thereof, they will probably now assume a Gentleness & Moderation in their Politics, even beyond what the Son of good Government requires - - Recollect, as a Case in point, the unnatural Coalition, that lately took place, for the purpose of opposing the National Bank, & the Motives that occasioned it -

Nothing is so unstable as popular Opinion in regard to particular Points of Politics, & in no Instance does the Weakness, & oftentimes the Deformity [?], of human Nature, So evidently appear, as in the constant Revolutions, that it undergoes -

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But I am afraid, that too general an Apathy has taken place amongst the leading Characters of the Republican Party; - Remember the Fable of the Hare & the Tortoise - Perseverance will affect

Wonders - Too great a Reliance on the Goodness of a Cause creates an Indolence, which often proves fatal to it -

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With my best Compliments, & those of Mrs Bingham to Mrs Rush, believe me to be Sincerely

Your obed hbl ser

W<sup>m</sup> Bingham

On verso:

Doctor Rush

Philadelphia

162

Wm Bingham

Novembr. 8. 1784