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Title: Letter from Charles Nisbet to Ashbel Green

Date: October 14, 1794

Location: O-SpahrB-undated-6

Contact:

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Rev. & Dear Sir,

Carlisle, 14 October, 1794

I was favoured with yours of Sept. 12th in due time, I thought I had sufficiently explained my Reasons for asking you to write me whether you had treated my Letters with Contempt, or given them to my Enemies to do me hurt. My Adversaries had so confidently asserted that they were in Possession of my Letters, that tho' I knew, both that you were incapable of betraying me, & that they had not the least Acquaintance with you, I needed to have something to show in my own Defence. Indeed if I had asked you of my own Accord, to write me whether you were an honest Man or not, you might have justly conceived it as an Insult of a very uncommon kind, but when I only ask you to vindicate your Self against the Calumnies of my Enemies, who wish'd to represent you as a Traitor, & myself as a Fool for trusting you, I hope you will allow that this greatly alters the Case. The open Manner in which I wrote you was a sufficient Proof that I had an entire Confidence in your Friendship, fidelity & Discretion, but I could not prevent the Impudence of my Adversaries, who stably affirmed that they were in Possession of my Letters, & who think themselves wise & great Men, because they are Members of Congress & the State Legislature, & Trustees of Colleges. We have had a great Army here which has almost eaten us up, tho' I am afraid that they were not very well served. They have now marched to the Westward, where I suspect that they will be still worse accommodated, than they were while here. I observed that the French Red Cap of Liberty is displayed in the Colours of our Militia, & the Insurgents, I am informed, have Liberty & Equality inscribed on their Colours & Banners of Sedition. This looks something ridiculous, that our Government which has given so unequivocal & so public an Approbation to the Cause of the French Revolutionists, should be obliged by the Law of Self-preservation to take Arms against their fellow Citizens, for acting on these very Principles which they have so often approved. You know that I believe that Government are perfectly right, on my Principles, but I am no less convinced that they are perfectly in the wrong, according to their own, as they are now in Arms against the Authority of that very Sovereign People in their own Country, whose Conduct in France they have so often approved of. It is nothing to the Purpose to say, that by the People they meant the Majority of the People, as they have given their decided Approbation to the Revolution of the 10th August 1792, which was brought about by a Minority of 48 Men, without the Consent or Knowledge of the Majority. This seems to be a puzzling Question, how a Minority in France should be the Sovereign People, & only a Parcel of Rebels or Insurgents in America. It is time that our Government should abandon the Defence of their supposed

ments the French Revolutionists, when their Doctrines have excited an Insurrection against
the best Government in the World. But the Question is, how, after having committed them-
selves so far, they can retreat with Honour. But when Self-preservation has compelled
them to take Arms against the Practice of the French Doctrines, it ought to cost little trou-
ble to renounce them in Theory. And now when Robespierre has formally renounced them
by cutting his own Throat, which however Thomas Paine has forgot to enumerate among
the Rights of Man, it will be no Disparagement to American Politicians, to acknowledge
that they have been wrong, & that the Crusade of Kings combined against France, are
not more guilty than the President of the United States & the Troops under his Command,
who are in Arms against the Friends of Liberty & Equality, as well as the combined
Powers of Europe. This Insurrection ought to be an Era in our Politics, & if properly improv'd,
might teach our Citizens that War is an evil & expensive thing, as well as that they are not
in a Condition to support it, & that the Custom of flattering the People as Sovereigns, is
a natural Cause of Seditions & Insurrections. If our public Men did not think it their
Interest to tell the People a great Deal of Nonsense, which they themselves do not believe,
we would never find such Thoughtless & Tyranny on the Part of the People. But when
they are told by their treacherous & selfish Leaders, that all Power is in them, & that
they have a Right to exercise it as they please, what can be more naturally expected,
than that they should assume & exercise that Power to which they are assured that they
have a Right, & like Thomas Paine, to add Practice to Theory. This is our Election
Day, in which all the free Citizens of the several Sections of this Municipality
are to exercise the inestimable Right & Privilege, of electing each a four thousandth
Part of a Member of Assembly and a seven thousandth Part of a Delegate in
Congress. And it is not to be doubted that they will conduct themselves with as much
Wisdom as the Trees of the Wood in Gotham's Parable, when they went to set a Thing
over them. A Shoemaker, who is our Sheriff, is the Candidate for Congress, who is set up
by the Sovereign People, on the Merit of having conducted their Mobs & Delibera-
tions, & Liberty Pole Meetings, with consummate Judgment & exemplary Decency.
Now as the Stories were of Opinion, that every Wife Man is a Shoemaker, our People
think it evident by a Parity of Reasons, that every Shoemaker must necessarily be
a wife Man. Besides it may be expected that he will know what Laws are suitable
to his Constituents, as he has often taken the Measure of their feet for many Years
past. And as the Election happens to be on St. Crispin's Day, his Success is confi-
dend as certain. What an excellent Congress may you not expect, if all the other
Counties & Districts shall be possessed of as much Wisdom! The assembling of the
Army here has irritated rather than intimidated the Sovereign People. They say

that we have had our Day, but that they hope to have theirs in their Turn, & threaten to do dreadful things, how soon the Army is disbanded. May they affirm that the Army will never return, & that the Western People have laid a Plan for destroying it by famine, without firing a Gun. In the mean time I hope that this Plan will not succeed, & that the Army having sufficiently experienced the fatigues of War by bad Provisions & Accommodations, which must be the Case, after all the Care that has been taken, will return in good health, & in a Disposition to vote for Peace, & to discourage those detestable Doctrines of the Sovereignty of the People that have cost them so much Fatigue, Danger and Expence. Exertions of this kind can not be expected to be frequent, & would soon be ruinous, but as long as we trust our Defence to the Militia Laws, especially if the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People should continue to be believed by the greatest Number, such Exertions would be necessary almost every Year. If our People would lay aside their childish Prejudices, which have been so carefully encouraged by their selfish Leaders, they would now be convinced that there can be no Standing Government without a Standing Army, & that we can only have our Election, whether we will have a Standing Army or a Standing Mob, as is the Case in France. Three hundred Regulars, Stationed at Pittsburg, might have saved all the immense Expence of the present Expedition, both to the public & to private Persons, by detecting & apprehending the Ringleaders of the Mob, before they had time to assemble in force. It is a Reproach to our Church that all those Missions who are concerned in this Insurrection, call themselves Presbyterians, tho' it is evident that they have acted on French, & not on Presbyterian Principles. And as their Ministers are popular, & highly studious of Popularity, it is impossible to believe that this Insurrection could have been raised without their Countenance or Connivance, & except in the Case of Mr. Clark alone, it has never been heard of that they gave any Discouragement to the late Riots, altho' I heard at that very time that one of them had excommunicated a young Woman for hearing a Man playing on a Fiddle, & the Man for having played in her hearing. In short they seem to have acted as if they really believed that a Duty on Spirits was highly detrimental to the Spiritually Interests of their Hearers. But I greatly suspect that Religion, call it experimental or what you please, that allows its Professors to destroy the Property & expose the Lives of their Neighbours, & to violate the Laws of their Country. From all such Experimental Religion, Good Lord deliver us! I am with Esteem,

Res^d & Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant

Cha. ^r Wisbech.

Chas. Nesbit

Patriot - Educator - ~~Days~~

The Rev. and Dr. Ashbel Green,

Philadelphia.

Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the proposed publication of a new edition of the "Patriot - Educator" and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the printer for his consideration.



Carlisle, 14th October, 1794.

Rev^d. & Dear Sir,

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This looks something ridiculous, that our Government which has given so unequivocal & so public an Approbation to the Cause of the French Revolutionists, should be obliged by the Law of Self-preservation to take Arms against their fellow Citizens, for acting on these very Principles - which they have so often approved. You know that I believe that Government are perfectly right, on my Principles, but I am no less convinced that they are perfectly in the wrong, according to their own, as they are now in Arms against the Authority of that very Sovereign People in their own Country, whose Conduct in France they have so often approved of. It is nothing to the Purpose to say, that by the People they meant the Majority of the People, as they have given their decided Approbation to the Revolution of the 10th August 1792, which was brought about by a Minority of 48 Men, without the Consent or Knowledge of the Majority. This seems to be a puzzling Question, how a Minority in France should be the Sovereign People, & only a Parcel of Rebels or Insurgents in America. It is time that our Government should abandon the Defence of their supposed friend, ~~the~~ French Revolutionists, when their Doctrines have excited an Insurrection against the freest Government in the World. But the Question is, how, after having committed themselves so far, they can retreat with Honour. But when Self-preservation has compelled them to take Arms against the Practice of the French Doctrines, it ought to cost little trouble to renounce them in Theory. And now when Robespierre has formally renounced them by cutting his own Throat, which however Thomas Paine has forgot to enumerate among the Rights of Man, it will be no Disparagement to American Politicians, to acknowledge that they have been wrong, & that the Crusade of Kings combined against France,

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Rev.^d & Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant.

CHA.^s NISBET