Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

http://archives.dickinson.edu/

Documents Online

Title: Letters from James Buchanan to Nahum Capen

Date: 1849-1851

Location: MC 1998.10

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections Waidner-Spahr Library Dickinson College P.O. Box 1773 Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Washington 22 Sanuary 1849.

My dear Sir /

your seview of the late was with Mexico, So far as I have found time to examine it, proves to be are that I had anticipated. The papers of M. Sefferson will cast much light upon the origin of parties in this Country; and in healing whom this subject you ought to have them before you. An appropriation of \$6000 has already been made by Congress for their publication; but the is to be made under the authority of the Soint Lebrary Committee of Congress. When the papers were deported in the State Octiantimento by I Jefferson Randolph, he informed me that his brother, a member of the Charlottesvelle Bas in Vergesuo who was familiar with them ale, desired to superintends there publication I under the discussolances, he would have shong claises for the appointment. The Libeary Committee, however, must decide.

your proposed work, compand with the ability which you have already displayed, would be one of the highest importance; and when you verity Washington I shall be happy to make your personal acquaintance & afford you all the aid we my power. yours very respectfully Nahum Capen Esquie James Such an ano no to be made under the authority of the boost defined lessen

of Control of allow the property were deferred in the effect

Washington, 22 January 1849

My dear Sir/

Your review of the late war with Mexico, so far as I have found time to examine it, proves to be all that I had anticipated. The papers of Mr. Jefferson will cast such light upon the origin of parties in this Country; and in treating upon this subject you ought to have them before you. An appropriation of \$6000 has already been made by Congress for their publication: but this is to be made under the authority of the Joint Library Committee of Congress. When the papers were deposited in the State Department by T. Jefferson Randolph, he informed me that his brother, a member of the Charlottesville Bar in Virginia who was familiar with then all, desired to superintend their publication & under the circumstances, he would have strong claims for this appointment. The Library Committee, however, must decide.

[Page Break]

Your proposed work, composed with the ability which you have already displayed, would be one of the highest importance; and when you visit Washington I shall be happy to make your personal acquaintance & afford you all the aid in my power.

Yours very respectfully James Buchanan

Nahum Capen Esquire

Wheatland, muce Lancastin 12 April 1851. My dear Sir / Absence from home of other causes have too loves prevented me from answering your favor of the 23 letterno. For the

I hope you will pardon me. budged I am not yet prepared to give you a list of the Converds in this State who could from the most satisfactors answers to your questions. Every person is so intent apone the intereste of the present moment that we have but few unliquarians amongst us. I am just about leaving home for a week of the days. after my return, I shall endeavor to give you a list of some names.

I have not had time, since I life Washington, to bislow

ling allention on my speeches the fe.

The Country is, at present, in an dangerous I might almost say alarming condition. Disaffection to the union is Specading in the extreme Southern States; & should South Carolina allempto to Sceeder, which may Heavin forbed, no man can predict the consequences. The Southern people now percesse that even of the Ingilion Mare should be executed by the authorities in the Northern States, the well be at such a numous expense & at such personal with I endugade, that the owners of Slaves generally were cease to pursue there; I that instead of peace, the law has laid the foundation from your fruit of increased agilation.

Nahum Capen En

Der Respectfully - James Buckanaro Wheatland, near Lancaster 12 April 1851.

My dear Sir/

Absence from home & other causes have too long prevented me from answering your-favor of the 23d ultimo. For this I hope you will pardon me.

Indeed I am not yet prepared to give you a list of the Democrats in the State who could give furnish the most satisfactory answers to your questions. Every person is so intent upon the interests of the present moment that we have but few antiquarians amongst us. I am just about leaving home for a week or ten days. After my return, I shall endeavor to give you a list of some names.

I have not had time, or probably I might say disposition since I left Washington, to bestow any attention on my speeches &c &c.

The country is, at present, in an dangerous I might almost say alarming condition. Disaffection to the Union is spreading in the extreme Southern States; & should South Carolina attempt to secede, which may Heaven forbid! no man can predict the consequences. The Southern people now perceive that even if the Fugitive Slave Law should be executed by the authorities in the Northern States, this will be at such a ruinous expense & at such personal risk & indignity, that the owners of Slaves generally will cease to pursue them; & that instead of peace, this law has laid the foundation of increased agitation.

from your friend very respectfully James Buchanan

Nahum Capen Esq

Wheatland, near Lancasters 2 May 1851.

In compliance with the promise contained on my lard I now send you the marner of Seter. A. Browne Esque & Hon: Richard Rush of Philadelphia, - Hon; Ephrain Banks, & General J. N. Jurviance of Hamisburg, John Snyder Esquie of Pettsburg, Hon: George. 10. Woodward of Wilkesbarre, Hon: I. S. Black of Somewet & General John

Daves of Davisvelle, Bucks County.

In reply to your of the 23 ultimo; I should doubt very much the policy of holding such a Convention as you Suggest, chiefy because I cannot conceive how the malenals worth of Sennylvanea of which it would be compared could harmonise. And even if the were possible as could under in sustaining resolutions in favor of the Compromise, how would thus tend to unite the old democrats of the South. You are aware that in the States of Georgea, Alabamas & not to sheat of South Carolina lifsefriffe, there are now no white - no Democratic harts. The maloreal's of which there parties were composed now constitute The Union & the States rights parties. Whilst both there parties

hold, and I think justly, that the Compromise was a hard bargain for the South, the former are in favor of acquies cence for the Sake of the union, whilst the latter seem determined to insist that a portion of the territory acquired by there our joint efforts though yet be opened to the property of Southern americants. The infopulate of executing the Sugilive Slave Law in the Northern States, weekout such a numous cypiense & pass such personal indignity to the master as but few would be willing to meur, to gether with the recent elections in Ohio, New York, I Mapachuselles of free Soclers or abolitionests to the Senate) have considerably increased the number of the State Rights party in the far South. This parts claim to be emphalically Democratico. Under these peculiar circumstances, I think to would be most wise for every sound of union loving Democrate trushin his own state within his own sphere, by all the means in his power, to advocate the faithful execution of the Juziline Slave Law; without resorting to the dangerous experiments of a Scaleonar Convention. compared of delegates from States in a particular division of the Union. Such a Convention could adopt no resolutions which would satisfy both parkes in the far South; whilst the example might be dangerous. Better leave the South now equiling there, they may at last selle down into an acquescence in the measures of Compromises. There are my opinions,

Though I may be mustation of am open to conviction. The Senatorial election is ellapachusells is a very bad omen; because it shows that the State is nearly unanimous on the free soil question. Between Summer & Winthrop I would not give a bullon for the choice of Webster whilst he has recently refer wisely & well is now gathering the buller fruit of his long continues efforts to gratify the North by ministering to Northern projudices from your friends Mery respectfully against Southern Slavery. James Buckanung Nahune Capun Esg

My dear Sir/

In compliance with the promise contained in my last I now send you the names of Peter A. Brown Esquire & Hon: Richard Rush of Philadelphia, - Hon: Ephram Banks, & General J. N. Purviance of Harrisburg, John Snyder Esquire of Pittsburg, Hon: George W. Woodward of Wilkesbarré, Hon: J. S. Black of Somerset & General John Davies of Davisville, Bucks County.

Private

In reply to yours of the 23 ultimo; I should doubt very much the policy of holding such a Convention as you suggest, chiefly because I cannot conceive how the materials north of Pennsylvania of which it would be composed could harmonise. And even if their it were possible such an assembly we could not unite in sustaining resolutions in favor of the Compromise, how would this tend to reunite the old democrats of the South? You are aware that in the States of Georgia, Alabama & Mississippi not to speak of South Carolina, there are is now no Whig – no Democratic party. The material of which those parties were composed now constitute the Union & the States Rights parties. Whilst both these parties

[Page Break]

hold, and I think justly, that the Compromise was a hard bargain for the South, the former are in favor of acquiescence for the sake of the Union, whilst the latter seem determined to insist that a portion of the territory acquired by their & our joint efforts should shall yet be opened to the property of Southern [one word illegible]. The impossibility of executing the Fugitive Slave Law in the Northern States, without such a ruinous expense & for such personal indignity to the master as but few would be willing to incur, together with the recent elections in Ohio, New York, & Massachusetts of free soilers or abolitionists to the Senate, has considerably increased the number of the State Rights party in the far South. This party claim to be emphatically Democratic. Under these peculiar circumstances, I think it would be most wise for every sound & Union loving Democrat within his own sphere & within his own State, by all the means in his power, to advocate the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law without resorting to the dangerous experiment of a sectional division of the Union. Such a convention could adopt no resolutions which would satisfy both parties in the far South; whilst the example might be dangerous. Better leave the South to themselves; & at last, I trust & hope after the violent effervescence now existing there, they may at last generally settle down into an acquiescence in the measures of compromise. These are my opinions,

[Page Break]

though I may be mistaken & am open to conviction.

The Senatorial election in Massachusetts is a very bad omen; because it shows that the State is nearly unanimous in the free soil question. Between Sumner & Winthrop I would not give a button for the choice; & Webster whilst he has recently acted wisely & well is now

gathering the bitter fruit of his long continued efforts to gratify the North by ministering to Northern prejudices against Southern Slavery.

from your friend very respectfully James Buchanan

Nahum Capen