

Halifax C. N. B. May 25th 1846

My dear sir: I have long desired to express to you, my hearty but hearty approbations of the masterly editorials and Congressional reports of the Union. You have almost silenced opposition upon the Oregon question, and scourged the aliens, fastidious fault-finders, and hair-splitting mongrels into utter shame; and have opened the eyes of some of our timid friends, to the path of patriotism and safety.

But, my dear sir, you have yet the hardest task to perform. Whilst the ranks and file of our party are quietly pursuing their daily labours, feeling secure in the ascendancy attained in the campaign of 1844, and in the orthodoxy and fidelity of our file-leader, our prominent leaders are back-sliding. They are tainting the fruits of our victory with the rankest Federalism. We are in danger of retrograding to the position at which the Mayville veto scotched the onward march of ~~usurpation~~ ^{usurpation}. The "iron nerve" of Old Hickory saved us there - May we confide in "Young Hickory" to save us now?

I will not despair - but I frankly confess that I have doubts and fears. When I look at the league of sectional interests, ruling the actions of our stoutest champions in Congress, and luring them by the prospects of sectional advantages, out of the path of constitutional duty, into the schemes of ultra-Federalism - when I see the ultra-states-rights Chief, asserting his great genius in efforts to maintain in effect, that the Constitution has been remodeled by steam! and that the Mississippi with its torrent like current, has been converted by Fulton, into an "Inland Sea" - when I see the same Chief, dogmatically ^{asserting} ~~maintaining~~ that a partial distribution of public lands, for the prosecution of partial schemes of internal improvement - yea, that even direct appropriations from the Federal Treasury for the same purpose, are clearly constitutional and proper, whenever and wherever the value of the public lands can thereby be enhanced: when I see ~~that~~ a broad section of our glorious Union, from the Peaks of the North-West, to the Gulf of the South, lured into acquiescence in such heresies, and in undivided phalanges, seeking their sectional interests at the expense of the Constitution, I tremble in contemplation of the prospect before us.

Is it presumptuous in me, to urge you, to appeal directly to the President, ^{by proper persons} to smash these schemes at the first opportunity?

by a Hickory like veto? It would carry with it a moral power
which would secure the respect, ^{even} of his enemies, and the hearty applause
and grateful thanks of the great mass of his constituents - would
bring back hundreds, who are now blinded by self-interest, to the
true Democratic faith - would establish a rallying point for
the Democracy, and a touch-stone by which to test political
aspirants - above all, would save the Constitution from violation,
and save the States and the people from the corrupt and corrupt-
ing power of a gigantic, usurping National Government, adminis-
tered for the benefit of favored sections, and pampered clashes,
and relying for its support, upon the cupidity of those sections and
clashes, and upon its unbridled power over the purse-strings of
the people.

When did Federal Cupidity or ambition lack a pre-
cedent or plausible pretext for any usurpation? I am aware that
the General Government, in its munificence to the territories and new
States holding public lands, has again and again made grants
for various purposes. Can such past favors repeal the Federal
Constitution? Can a grant to Indiana, for instance, make it
Constitutional to make a Rail-Road for Michigan, another
for Mississippi, another for Florida, and yet another, and
another, until Federalism shall have brought help enough
from Democracy, to corroborate its usurping and corrupting
schemes and systems? When precedents begin to work that
way, ought not the voice of every sound-hearted Democrat
to be "Down with all such precedents! and down! down!!
with every project and scheme not clearly authorized by the
Constitution as it is written?"

In the nomination and in the canvass which
resulted in the election of Mr. Polk, I took, though in bad
health, an active, and I may safely say, regardless of any
imputation of vanity, not an inefficient part. In a private
conference of our delegation in the Baltimore Convention, I
made the first speech, and I believe the only speech, in
favour of dropping Cass and taking up Polk, on ~~the~~
first ballot, after his name was announced by the New
Hampshire delegation. Such was the earnestness of my
appeal, being predicated upon the fact, that the Virginia
flag, without spot or blemish, had been magnanimously and
gallantly hoisted by the Granite State, in the nomination

of James K. Polk" — So earnestly did I appeal to my
brother delegates, to bear in mind the fact, that he had come
there, with scarcely a hope of getting a nomination that was
true to our creed in all things — such as a Northern man,
such as Polk, who was not only thoroughly with us upon the
Texas question, but upon the Bank, the Tariffs, the Internal Im-
-provement and distribution questions — in short, upon every
question involving our Democratic faith — such was the effect
of my appeal, though made in an off-hand and, no doubt,
awkward manner, that several prominent delegates came
to me (the lamented Roane, for one, giving me a warm-
-hearted grip with both hands) and pledged themselves,
that if upon casting ~~the~~ next vote, there should appear
any chance to get Mr. Polk nominated, they would all
join me in his support.

Pardon this system. My object is not to puff myself
- but to show you, that in going for Mr. Polk, we all considered
that we were securing the nomination of one, who would prove
true to the Virginia Resolutions and Report of '98-'99 — and who
of course, would unflinchingly resist every encroachment upon the
Constitution — especially such encroachments as he had warned
against in the days of Adams & Clay — and of course,
Mr. Clay's Internal Improvement and Distribution system,
no matter in what shape, or how plausibly presented — no
matter by whom or how powerfully sustained. With all my
fears, I still ardently hope, that the President will give the
enemy cause again to cry out, that "the power of Internal
Improvement lies crushed beneath the veto" — and that
he will afford his true friends who are true to the Constitution,
the high gratification of knowing that the Congress
"Young Hickory" was not a mere catch-word of the Campaign
of '44, as our opponents charged.

What a change the last news from the seat of war,
has wrought in our fault finding Whig friends! The first news of
danger and disasters set them to complaining, and (with shame
be it written) some of them to exulting in our misfortunes. "See
the fruits" said they "of your democracy." But since the news
of the smothering of Matamoros, of many Mexican apailants
with it — all, all rejoice in the achievement, and in the
hope, that Genl. Taylor & his brave comrades, will weed

to themselves a clean road - clean through the heart of Mexico if necessary. Let every voice be raised for our country and against its enemies foreign & domestic. And may such scourings as that which you gave the alien organ of Whiggery the other day, be the lot of one and all of ^{its kindred} them.
But, my dear sir, whilst repelling foreign invaders, let us not lose sight of the threatened invasion of the Charter of our liberties at home. We have more to fear from the latter, than from the former.

Thomas Ritchie Esq.
Washington Secty D. C.

If I had the time, and could with propriety, farther tax your patience, I am vain enough to believe, that I could demonstrate that the war with Mexico, affords arguments in favour of rather than against a lower tariff, as a better measure for revenue - and, ^{in favour of} an Independent Constitutional Treasury, for receiving, keeping, and disbursing that revenue. But I have bores you enough for the present.

Truly your friend
Thos. H. Arendt

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