

[Johnson to Council]

Original.

Philadelphia 17. April 1776.

Gentlemen. Yesterday morning just before the meeting of Congress the letters from Balt. which occasioned the Resolution of yesterday came to the hands of the president. By the same express, and as I believe under the same cover came an Anonymous letter referring to a copy therein inclosed from Gen^l Lee to M^r Samuel Purviance. I saw and read the copy which was in Purviances hand writing. Lee strongly urged the immediate seizing and securing of the Gov^r. After the minutes of the preceeding day were read the President began reading the Anonymous letter, but he had not proceeded far before he came to a part desiring that it might not be made known to the Congress but, as I think, to such only as the President might think proper to trust with the contents, the President hesitated, for he had not before read the letter, and seemed desirous of running his Eye over it but on being desired to read out he did so, from the inclosure above mentioned as well as many expressions in the letter and M^r Purviances being the Heroe of the tale which was told in the first person I had not the least doubt but that Purviance was the Author and M^r Andrew Allen who saw the letter and is acquainted with Purviances hand writing says it was his.

The letter informs that the writer of it had impressed on Gen^l Lee, in his way to Virg^a an Idea that the Council of Safety was timorous and inactive and represents the Council of Safety and Convention too as being afraid to execute the Duties of their Stations, his own and the conduct of the Convention on an affair that you must remember he contrasts to the Disadvantage of the Latter whose inaction he imputes to want of spirit. He speaks of the orders he gave Cap^t Nicholson on the late alarm and how the Council of Safety was alarmed and frightened at the spirit and boldness of them—represents himself as an object against whom the intentions of the Council of Safety are levelled and in proof recites a conversation with, or saying of one of them to the effect that he was a warm man or a hot headed man whose power must be pulled down or he would throw things into Confusion. As I heard the letter read but once I cannot undertake to repeat expressions with exactness but I think I have preserved the sentiments and have not exaggerated in any thing and on the whole I esteem it a vile injurious calumny calculated like his conversation with Gen^l Lee to spread suspicion and distrust of the only executive in our province. If I am not mistaken the letter mentions further that some Gen^l were sent from Balt. or were by him proposed to be sent to Annapolis, who should engage the officer commanding the troops there to secrecy