

Documents

Accompanying the President's Message of March 9, 1812.

MR. HENRY TO MR. MONROE.

Philadelphia, Feb. 20, 1812.

To James Monroe, Esq. Secretary of State, &c.

Sir,

Much observation and experience have convinced me, that the injuries and insults with which the U. States have been so long and so frequently visited, and which cause their present embarrassment, have been owing to an opinion entertained by foreign states, "that in any measure tending to wound their pride or to provoke their hostility, the government of this country could never induce a great majority of its citizens to concur" — and as many of the evils which flow from the influence of this opinion on the policy of foreign nations, may be removed by any act that can produce unanimity among all parties in America, I voluntarily tender to you, sir, such means as I possess, towards promoting so desirable and important an object — which, if accomplished, cannot fail to extinguish, perhaps, for ever, those expectations abroad, which may protract indefinitely an accommodation of existing differences, and check the progress of industry and prosperity in this rising empire.

I have the honour to transmit herewith the documents and correspondence relating to an important mission in which I was employed by sir James Craig, the late governor-general of the British provinces in North America, in the winter of the year 1809.

The publication of these papers will demonstrate a fact not less valuable than the good already proposed — it will prove that no reliance ought to be placed on the professions of good faith of an administration, which by a series of disastrous events, has fallen into such hands as a Castlereagh, a Wellesley or a Liverpool — I should rather say into the hands of the stupid subalterns, to whom the pleasures and the indolence of those ministers have consigned it.

In contributing to the good of the United States by an exposition which cannot, I think, fail to solve and melt all division and disunion among its citizens, I flatter myself with the fond expectation that when it is made public in England, it will add one great motive to the many that already exist, to induce the nation to withdraw its confidence from men whose political career is a fruitful source of injury and embarrassment in America; of injustice and misery in Ireland; of distress and apprehension in England; and contempt every where. In making this communication to you, sir, I deem it incumbent on me, distinctly and unequivocally to state, that I adopt no party views — that I have not changed any of my political opinions — that I neither seek nor desire the patronage nor confidence of any government nor any party — and that in addition to the motives already expressed, I am influenced by a just resentment of the perfidy and dishonour of those who first violated the conditions upon which I received their confidence; who have injured me, and disappointed the expectations of my friends, and left me no choice but between a degrading acquiescence in injustice, and a retaliation which is necessary to secure to me my own respect.

This wound will be felt where it is merited — and if sir James Craig still live, his share of the pain will excite no sympathy among those who are at all in the secret of our connection.

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your most obedient servant, &c. (Signed) J. HENRY.

No I.

Mr. Ryland, secretary to sir James Craig, late governor-general of the British provinces in North America, to Mr. Henry. Application to undertake the mission to the United States.

(Most secret and confidential.) Quebec, 26th Jan. 1809.

My dear sir,

The extraordinary situation of things at this time in the neighbouring states, has suggested to the governor in chief, the idea of employing you on a secret and confidential mission to Boston, provided an arrangement can be made to meet the important end in view, without throwing an absolute obstacle in the way of your professional pursuits. The information and political observations heretofore received from you, were transmitted by his excellency to the secretary of state, who has expressed his particular approbation of them, and there is no doubt that your able execution of such a mission as I have above suggested, would give you a claim, not only on the governor general, but on his majesty's ministers, which might eventually contribute to your advantage. You will have the goodness, therefore, to acquaint me, for his excellency's information, whether you could

make it convenient to engage in a mission of this nature, and what pecuniary assistance would be requisite to undertake it without injury to yourself.

At present, it is only necessary for me to add, that the governor would furnish you with a cypher, for carrying on your correspondence, and that in case the leading party in any of the states wished to open a communication with this government, their views might be communicated through you.

I am with great truth, and regard, My dear sir,

Your most faithful humble servant, (Signed) HERMAN W. RYLAND. John Henry, Esq.

No. II.

General instructions from sir J. H. Craig to Mr. Henry, respecting his secret mission.

His excellency the governor in chief's instructions to Mr. Henry, February 1809. (Most secret and confidential.)

Quebec, 6th Feb. 1809.

Sir—As you have so readily undertaken the service which I have suggested to you as being likely to be attended with much benefit to the public interests, I am to request that with your earliest convenience you will proceed to Boston.

The principal object that I recommend to your attention, is the endeavour to obtain the most accurate information of the true state of affairs in that part of the union, which, from its wealth, the number of its inhabitants, and the known intelligence and ability of several of its leading men naturally possess a very considerable influence over, and will indeed probably lead the other eastern states of America in the part that they may take at this important crisis.

I shall not pretend to point out to you the mode by which you will be most likely to obtain this important information; your own judgment and the connections which you may have in the town must be your guide.

I think it however necessary to put you on your guard against the sanguineness of an aspiring party—The federalists as I understand, have at all times discovered a leaning to this disposition, and their being under its particular influence at this moment is the more to be expected from their having no ill founded ground for their hopes of being nearer the attainment of their object than they have been for some years past.

In the general terms which I have made use of in describing the object which I recommend to your attention, it is scarcely necessary that I should observe, I include the state of the public opinion, both with regard to their internal politics and to the probability of a war with England; the comparative strength of the two great parties into which the country is divided, and the views and designs of that which may ultimately prevail.

It has been supposed that if the federalists of the eastern states should be successful in obtaining that decided influence which may enable them to direct the public opinion, it is not improbable, that rather than submit to a continuance of the difficulties and distresses to which they are now subject, they will exert that influence to bring about a separation from the general union. The earliest information on this subject may be of great consequence to our government, as it may also be, that it should be informed how far in such an event they would look to England for assistance or be disposed to enter into a connection with us.

Although it would be highly inexpedient that you should in any manner appear as an avowed agent, yet if you could contrive to obtain an intimacy with any one of the leading party, it may not be improper that you should insinuate, though with great caution, that if they should wish to enter into any communication with our government, through me, you are authorised to receive any such, and will safely transmit it to me; and as it may not be impossible that they should require some document by which they may be assured, that you are really in the situation in which you represent yourself, I enclose a credential to be produced in that view; but I most particularly enjoin and direct, that you do not make use of this paper, unless a desire to that purpose should be expressed, and unless you see good ground for expecting that the doing so may lead to a more confidential communication than you can otherwise look for.

In passing through the state of Vermont, you will of course exert your endeavours to procure all the information that the short stay you will probably make there will admit of. You will use your own discretion as to delaying your journey, with this view, more or less, in proportion to your prospects of obtaining any information of consequence.

I request to hear from you as frequent as possible, and as letters directed to me might excite suspicion, it may be as well that you put them under cover to Mr. —, and as even the addressing letters always to the same person might attract notice, I recommend your sometimes addressing your packet to the chief justice here, or occasionally through fel-

dom to Mr. Ryland, but never with the addition of his official inscription.

I am Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant, (Signed) J. H. CRAIG. John Henry, Esq.

No. III.

Credentials from sir James Craig, to Mr. Henry, 6th Feb. 1809.

(COPY)

The bearer Mr. John Henry is employed by me, and full confidence may be placed in him, for any communication which any person may wish to make to me in the business committed to him. In faith of which I have given him this under my hand and seal at Quebec the 6th day of February, 1809. (Signed) J. H. CRAIG.

No. IV.

Mr. Henry's letters to Sir James Craig, written whilst employed on a mission to Boston.

Answer to the letter of Mr. Secretary Ryland proposing the mission, &c. Montreal, Jan. 31, 1809.

I have to acknowledge the favour of your letter of the 20th inst. written by the desire of his excellency the governor in chief; and hasten to express through you, to his excellency, my readiness to comply with his wishes.

I need not add how very flattering it is to receive from his excellency the assurance of the approbation of his majesty's secretary of state for the very humble services that I may have rendered.

If the nature of the service in which I am to be engaged will require no other disbursements than for my individual expenses, I do not apprehend that these can exceed my private resources.

I shall be ready to take my departure before my instructions can be made out.

I have the honour, to be, &c. J. H. Y.

H. W. Ryland, Sec. &c.

No. 2.

To his excellency the gov. gen. &c. in answer to his letter of instruction.

Montreal, Feb. 10, 1809.

SIR—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your excellency's letter of credence, and the cypher for carrying on my correspondence. I have bestowed much pains upon the cypher, and am, notwithstanding this deficient in some points which might enable me to understand it clearly. I have compared the example with my own exemplification of the cypher, and find a difference in the results; and as the present moment seems favorable to the interference of H. M.'s government in the measures pursued by the federal party in the northern states, and more especially as the assembly of Massachusetts is now in session, I think it better to set forward immediately, than wait for a further explanation of the means of carrying on a secret correspondence; which the frequency of safe private conveyances to Canada will render almost wholly unnecessary. Should it however, be necessary at any time, I take leave to suggest that the index alone furnishes a very safe and simple mode. In it there is a number for every letter in the alphabet, and particular numbers for particular phrases; so that when I do not find in the index the particular word I want, I can spell it with the figures which stand opposite to the letters. For example, if I wish to say that "troops are at Albany," I find under the letter "T" that number 16 stands for "troops" and number 125 for "Albany"; the intervening words "are at," I supply by figures corresponding with the letters in these words.

It will be necessary to provide against accident by addressing the letters to Mr. —, of Montreal, with a small mark on the corner of the envelope which he will understand. When he receives it, he will then address the enclosure to your excellency and send it from Montreal by mail. I will be careful not to address your excellency in the body of the letter nor sign my name to any of them. They will be merely designated by the initials A. B.

If this mode should in any respect appear exceptionable your excellency will have the goodness to order a more particular explanation of the card. It would reach me in safety enclosed to Boston.

I have the honour to be, &c. J. H. Y.

No. 3.

Burlington, (Vt.) Feb. 14, 1809.

SIR—I have remained here two days in order fully to ascertain the progress of the arrangements heretofore made for organizing an efficient opposition to the general government, as well as to become acquainted with the opinions of leading people, relative to the measures of that party which has the ascendancy in the national councils.

On the subject of the embargo laws there seems but one opinion; namely, that they are unnecessary, oppressive and unconstitutional. It must also be observed that the ex-

clusion of them is so invidious as to attract towards the officers of government the contempt of the people, which is of course transferable to the government itself; so that in case the state of Massachusetts should take any bold step towards resisting the execution of these laws, it is highly probable it may calculate upon the hearty co-operation of the people of Vermont.

I learn that the governor of this state is now visiting the towns in the northern section of it; and makes no secret of his determination as commander in chief of the militia, to retuse obedience to any command from the general government which can tend to interrupt the good understanding that prevails between the Citizens of Vermont and H. M.'s subjects in Canada. It is further intimated that in case of war he will use his influence to preserve the state neutral, and resist with all the force he can command, any attempt to make it a party. I need not add that if these resolutions are carried into effect, the state of Vermont may be considered as an ally of G. Britain.

To what extent the sentiments which prevail in this quarter exist in the neighbouring states, or even in the eastern section of the state, I am unable to conjecture. I only can say with certainty, that the leading men of the federal party act in concert; and therefore, infer, that a common sentiment prevails the whole body throughout New-England.

I have seen a letter from a gentleman now at Washington to his correspondent in this place; and as its contents may serve to throw some light on passing events there, I shall send either the original or a copy with this dispatch. The writer of the letter is a man of character and veracity; and whether competent or not to form correct opinions himself is probably within the reach of all the knowledge that can be obtained by the party to which he belongs. It appears by this statement there is a very formidable majority in Congress on the side of administration notwithstanding which there is every reason to hope that the northern states in their distinct capacity, will unite and resist by force a war with G. B. In what mode this resistance will first shew itself is probably not yet determined upon; and may in some measure depend upon the reliance that the leading men place upon assurances of support from H. M.'s representatives in Canada; and as I shall be on the spot to tender this whenever the moment arrives, that it can be done with effect—there is no doubt that all their measures may be made subordinate to the intentions of H. M.'s government. Great pains are taken by the men of talents and intelligence to confirm the fears of the common people, as to the concurrence of the southern democrats in the projects of France, and every thing tends to encourage the belief, that the dissolution of the confederacy will be accelerated by the spirit which now animates both parties.

I am, &c. A. B.

No. 4.

Windsor, (Vt.) Feb. 19 1809.

SIR—My last (No. 3) was written at Burlington, the principal town in the northern part of the state of Vermont. I am now in the principal town in the eastern section.

The fallacy of men's opinions when they act under the influence of sensibility, and are strongly excited by those hopes which always animate a rising party, led me to doubt the correctness of the opinions which I received in the northern section of this state, which from its contiguity to Canada, and necessary intercourse with Montreal, has a strong interest in promoting a good understanding with his majesty's government: therefore, since my departure from Burlington, I have sought every favourable occasion of conversing with the democrats, on the probable result of the policy adopted by the general government. The difference of opinion is thus expressed.

The federal party declare that in the event of a war, the state of Vermont will treat separately for itself with G. Britain; and support to the utmost the stipulations in which it may enter, without any regard to the policy of the general government. The democrats on the other hand assert that in such a case as that contemplated, the people would be nearly divided into equal numbers; one of which would support the government if it could be done without involving the people in a civil war; but at all events would resist every thing in preference to a coalition with G. Britain. This difference of opinion is not to be wholly ascribed to the prejudices of party. The people in the eastern section of Vermont are not operated upon by the same hopes and fears as those on the borders of the British colony. These are not dependent upon Montreal for the sale of their produce nor the supply of foreign commodities. They are not apprehensive of any serious dangers or inconveniences from a state of war; and altho' they admit that the governor, council, and 3-4ths of their representation in congress are of the federal party, yet they do not believe that the state would stand alone,

and resist the national government. They do not however deny, that should the state of Vermont continue to be represented as it is at present, it would in all probability unite with the neighbouring states in any serious plan of resistance to a war which it might deem expedient to adopt. This, I think, is the safe opinion for you to rely on; if in place, reliance ought to be placed on any measure depending upon the will of the rabble, which is ever changing, and must ever be marked with ignorance, caprice and inconsistency. As the crisis approaches, the difficulty of deciding upon an hazardous alternative will increase; and unfortunately, there is not in Vermont any man of commanding talents, capable of attracting general confidence; and amidst the confusion of conflicting opinions, dangers and commotion, competent to lead in the path of duty or safety. The governor is an industrious, prudent man; & has more personal influence than any other; but his abilities are not suited to the situation in which a civil war would place him.

I am, &c. A. B.

No. 5.

Amherst, N. H. Feb. 23, 1809.

Sir,

A gentleman going direct to Canada, affords a safe and favorable opportunity of giving you some further account of my progress. I will not make use of the post-offices when I can avoid it; because private occasions supercede the necessity of writing in cypher—the contempt of decency and principle, which forms part of the morals of the subaltern officers of democracy, would incline them to break a seal, with the same indifference that they break their words, when either curiosity or interest is to be indulged.

I have not had sufficient time nor evidence to enable me to form any opinion for myself, of the lengths to which the federal party will carry their opposition to the national government in the event of a war. Much may be inferred from the result of the elections of governors, which within two months will be made in the states of Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island. From all I know and all I can learn of the general government, I am not apprehensive of an immediate war. The embargo is the favourite measure, and it is probable that other means will be employed to excite England to commit some act of hostility, for the sole purpose of placing the responsibility of war on that country—this I most particularly recommend to the consideration of ministers. The dread of opposition and the loss of popularity, will certainly keep the ruling party at Washington inactive.—They will risk any thing but the loss of power, and they are well aware that their power would pass away with the first calamity which their measures might bring upon the common people, [from whom that power emanates,] unless indeed they could find a sufficient excuse in the conduct of G. Britain. This impression cannot be too deeply felt by his majesty's ministers, nor too widely spread throughout the British nation. It will furnish you a sure guide in every policy that may be adopted towards the United States.

I have the honor to be, &c. A. B.

No. 6.

Boston, March 5, 1809.

Sir,

I am favoured with another opportunity of writing to you by a private conveyance; and think it probable at this season that the frequency of these will render it unnecessary to write to you in cypher.

It does not yet appear necessary that I should discover to any person the purpose of my visit to Boston; nor is it probable that I shall be compelled for the sake of gaining more knowledge of the arrangements of the federal party in these states, to avow myself as a regular authorised agent of the British government, even to those individuals who would feel equally bound with myself to preserve with the utmost inscrutability, so important a secret from the public eye.

I have sufficient means of information to enable me to judge of the proper period for offering the co-operation of Great-Britain, and opening a correspondence between the governor-general of British America, and those individuals who from the part they take in the opposition to the national government, as the influence they may possess in any new order of things that may grow out of the present differences, should be qualified to act on behalf of the northern states. An apprehension of any such state of things as is prefigured by these remarks, begin to subside since it has appeared by the conduct of the general government, that it is seriously alarmed at the menacing attitude of the northern states. But although it is believed that there is no probability of an immediate war,—yet no doubts are entertained that Mr. Madison will fall upon some new expedients to bring about hostilities; what these may be, can only be deduced from what appears to be practicable. A non-intercourse with England and France will probably supercede the embargo; which, by opening with the rest of Europe a partial legitimate commerce, and affording strong temptations to that which is illegal, will ex-