

Hugh Lawson White to Andrew Jackson, April 20, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

HUGH L. WHITE TO JACKSON.

Flint Hill, Tenn. , April 20, 1831.

My dear Sir, By the last mail I received your favor under date of the 9th instant. I am sorry that any thing should have occurred, to render it necessary, that any of your Cabinet should desire to withdraw, or that you should request them to do so. With Major Eaton I was intimately associated for several years, in the course of which, I formed a sincere friendship for him, which I hope and expect will last as long as life is spared to me; and should he return to Tennessee, it will give me the most sincere pleasure, to contribute all in my power to place him in any public station desired by him, or his friends. It ought not however to be concealed from him, or you, that he will have difficulties to encounter, with some of our friends, on account of some of his votes while in the Senate.

With Mr. Van Buren I served several Sessions and ever found him frank, candid and firm, in the course his judgment approved. His talents are unquestioned even by his bitter enemies. You are correct in placing me among the number of those, who desired to withdraw you from your chosen retreat, and to place you in the conspicuous station you now occupy. For this I had many reasons. First I wished to see the good old democratic doctrines practically restored to the Federal Government, and the modern doctrine of construction powers abolished. With you at the Head of the Government I believed this would be more likely to be effected, than with any other man. Secondly I had some State pride. You were a Tennessean. Thirdly I believed the public owed you more, for services actually rendered, than it did to any living man, and lastly you were my friend, and my

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fathers friend, and I wished to do anything, and everything in my power, consistent with my Country's good, to prove my unlimited confidence in your capacity for business, and in your integrity of character. Happily, as I think, for the people of the United States, we succeeded to the extent of our wishes, and thus far I have not been disappointed.

My dear Sir, Your kind wishes towards me personally cannot be realised. Nothing would add more to my comfort than to be so near you as to have a constant personal intercourse with you so long as we both live: but I am a believer in the doctrine of the late Lord Littleton, "That every man who is fit for any public employ is a better Judge of what he is fitted for than any of his friends, and that he shews his weakness by permitting himself to be placed in a station, for which he is not qualified." I am not qualified to discharge the duties of the office your partiality would confer upon me, and to qualify myself would require more labour than at this time of life could conveniently be submitted to. Again I must retain a home in Tennessee, and were I to go to Washington, my property would not only be unproductive but much of it wasted. Lastly I am your *personal* and *political friend*, and from you cannot accept office. If I wished an office, within the gift of the President, it would be my hearts desire that you should be displaced: because from a man whose undeviating friendship I have experienced from boyhood to advanced life, I never can think of either asking or accepting office. In this rule of conduct my opinion is so firmly fixed, that nothing could induce me to depart from it, but a belief that unless the public could receive my services in some particular office my country would sustain an injury. I have no idea that such a crisis has arrived, or ever will, in my day. Among your acquaintances there are many from whose services both you and the public would derive more benefit than any my humble abilities would enable me to render. With all the grateful feelings which a man ought to possess, for the honor your kindness would bestow, I must be permitted to decline the offer you have made in such obliging terms, under a conviction that farther reflection will satisfy you that my non acceptance was alike due to the public, to you, and to myself.

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Your Sincere friend