

**Andrew Jackson to John Randolph, November 11, 1831,
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by
John Spencer Bassett.**

TO JOHN RANDOLPH.1

1 Copy. Handwriting of A. J. Donelson.

Washington, November 11, 1831.

D'r Sir, I have received your favor of the 8th inst., and am truly gratified to hear that exercise and the pure air of Va have had a favorable influence upon your system. Allow me to express the hope that these causes aided by the society of your old friends may yet conquer your disease and restore your usual health.

You inform me that at a late meeting with your constituents you had occasion to use my private letters to you. I have too much confidence in your friendship and discretion to doubt the propriety of any reference which you can have made on that occasion to my correspondence. Although not perhaps as guarded in expression as it would have been if designed for publication, and in this respect may call for some explanation from you, its sentiments I trust are just and obvious enough to save me from misconception and yourself from misrepresentation in using them.

I am aware that some dissatisfaction was exerted in Va by the course of the executive in regard to appointments; but I was never sensible of the justness of the exceptions stated to the employment of Printers in the public service. The press is the Palladium of our liberties. Disfranchise those who conduct it: or what is the same thing make the calling of an editor a disqualification for the possession of those rewards which are calculated to enlarge the sphere of talent and merit, and which are accessible to other callings in life,

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and you necessarily degrade it. You throw out of its service the principles which foster virtue and distinction and in their place those of a contrary character naturally take root and grow up.

It is the object of all who really take an interest in the honor and welfare of our country to elevate the character of the press and make it the vehicle of truth and useful knowledge. What scheme can be more subversive of this object than one which virtually withdraws from the service of the press those who aspire to some higher character in life than that of mere agents for the advancement and distinction of others? The respectability of the humblest vocations in life cannot be maintained when circumscribed by such a rule, and much less can that be which aims to enlighten the public mind and thus guard the institutions of the country from the counsels of the unwise and the designs of the ambitious. Intending not to sanction a rule so unjust as this in the bestowal of the public patronage I refused to consider the editorial calling as unfit to offer a candidate for office; and accordingly appointed them on a few occasions when they were deemed honest and capable. In doing so I obeyed a sense of duty which I cannot doubt will be approved by the country at large.

There may have been instances in which I selected characters not the best calculated for the service in which they were placed, but explanations on this ground do not reach the objections to which you have alluded and are therefore not called for on this occasion. Those objections have reference to a general principle which renders it improper to appoint printers to offices of honor or emolument; or at least to such an undue partiality for this class of applicants on the part of this administration as to make it obnoxious to the charge of subsidizing the press.

The latter charge is as far from fact and truth as the principle stated would be from a just regard for the honor and independence of the press. On the score of numbers the proportion of printers who have been appointed will be found to warrant no such inference. The few who hold offices are without exception old and well tried members of

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the Republican party, and were in every instance distinguished by the confidence and regard of the community in which they lived. The fact is that it is against this feature of their appointments that the malice of my enemies has been directed, and I think the public mind will soon perceive it. Look at the operations of the Bank of the United States on this particular and see if all these objections are not gradually conformed to the lists which the magic power of that institution now threaten to enforce.

In regard however to these complaints and others of a similar character founded on a pretended distrust of *influences* near or around me, I can only say that they spring from the same false view of my character. I should loath myself did any act of mine afford the slightest colour for the insinuation that I follow blindly the judgement of any friend in the discharge of my proper duties as a public or private individual. I am sensible of my liability to err: but rest assured that I have too much confidence in the indulgence of my fellow citizens and in the integrity of my purposes to desire any other shield for my conduct than truth and a fair hearing from those who have a right to judge me.

Thanking you most sincerely for the freedom with which you have stated the apprehension of some of my friends and your own unaltered sentiments of friendship and regard, I remain my dear sir as usual yr. obliged and humble svt