

## John Caldwell Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, June 4, 1826, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN C. CALHOUN (VICE-PRESIDENT) TO JACKSON.

Private.

Washington, June 4, 1826.

*My dear Sir,* I avail myself of the present safe conveyance to renew our correspondence, after so long a suspension.

Majr. Eaton will give you all of the particulars of the long and interesting session of Congress, which has just terminated. There has been much excitement, but for my part, I am neither surprised nor displeased at the depth of feeling displayed by the members on several occasions, as I believe, that it has been caused by a thorough and honest conviction, that the liberties of the country are in danger, and not by the sentiment of faction, nor disappointment, as has been attributed. In my opinion liberty never was in greater danger; and such, I believe, to be the impression of the coolest and most considerate of our citizens. An issue has been fairly made, as it seems to me, between *power* and *liberty*; and it must be determined in the next three years, whether the real governing principle in our political system be the power and patronage of the Executive, or the voice of the people. For it can scarcely be doubted, that a scheme has been formed to perpetuate power in the present hands, in spite of the free and unbiased sentiment of the country; or to express it more correctly, those now in power act on a scheme resting on the supposition, that such is the force of Executive influence, that they, who wield it, can mould the publick voice at pleasure by an artful management of the patronage of office.<sup>1</sup>

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1 It is one of the very unexpected things in our political history that John Quincy Adams, who consistently refused to make appointments that would serve to promote his re-election, should have been proclaimed as one who debauched the patronage. It is even more singular that the charge should be repeated by a man as intelligent as Calhoun.

It must be obvious, if [it] should prove to be the fact, that a radical change has already been effected in our system. If power can be acquired against the voice of the majority, and when so acquired, can be maintained and perpetuated by the influence, which it gives, our government may indeed retain the forms of freedom, but its spirit will be gone. Nor will it be long before the form will follow the spirit. Let the Presidency be transmitted by the exercise of a corrupt patronage from hand to hand, and we shall soon consider the form of electing by the people a mere farce; nor will it then be difficult to reconcile the people to the transmission of the Executive power by hereditary principle, in some imperial family. I, however, hope for better things. I confide in the intelligence and virtue of the people, which have safely carried us through so many difficulties. Already, I see much to hope. The scheme appears to be well understood by many, and the publick indignation will swell just in proportion as it comes to be fully developed.

It will be no small addition to your future renown, that in this great struggle your name is found, as it always has been on the side of liberty, and your country. Occupying the grounds that you do, there can be no triumph over you, which will not also be a triumph over liberty. That you may live to witness a successful termination of the struggle, and that you may be the instrument, under Providence, of confounding political machinations and of turning the attempts against the liberty of the country, into the means of perpetuating our freedom, is my sincere wish. As to myself, I am content, let what may happen, provided the cause triumphs. I know that much of the Storm will fall on me; but so far from complaining, I deem it my glory to be selected as the object of attack in such a cause. If I had no higher object than personal advancement, my course would be easy. I would have nothing to do, but to float with the current of events. I feel, however, that such a course

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would be unworthy of the confidence, which the American people have reposed in me, and of the duty which every citizen owes his country.

With sincere regards