

**Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, August 29, 1790, from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**OPINION ON ST. CLAIR EXPEDITION J. MSS.**

[August 29, 1790.]

*Opinion on the question whether it will be expedient to notify to Lord Dorchester the real object of the expedition preparing by Governor St. Clair.*

On considering more fully the question whether it will be expedient to notify to Lord Dorchester the real object of the expedition preparing by Governor St. Clair, I still think it will not be expedient. For, ff the notification be early, he will get the Indians out of the way, and defeat our object. If it be so late as not to leave him time to withdraw them before our stroke be struck, it will then be so late also as not to leave him time to withdraw any secret aids he may have sent them. And the notification will betray to him that he may go on without fear in his expedition against the Spaniards, and for which he may yet have sufficient time after our expedition is over. On the other hand, if he should suspect our preparations are to prevent his passing our territory, these suspicions may induce him to decline his expedition, as, even should he think he could either force or steal a passage, he would not divide his troops, leaving (as he would suppose) an enemy between them able to take those he should leave, and cut off the return of those he should carry. These suspicions, too, would mislead both him and the Indians, and so enable us to take the latter more completely by surprise, and prevent him from sending secret aid to those whom he would not suppose the objects of the enterprise; thus effecting a double purpose of preventing his enterprise, and securing our own. Might it not even be expedient, with

## Library of Congress

a view to deter his enterprise, to instruct Governor St. Clair either to continue his pursuit of the Indians till the season be too far advanced for Lord Dorchester to move; or, on disbanding his militia, to give them general orders (which might reach the ears of Lord Dorchester) to be ready to assemble at a moment's warning, though no such assembly be really intended?

Always taking care neither to say nor do, against their passage, what might directly commit either our peace or honor.