12-28-1843

Samuel H. Laughlin letter to Moses Dawson

Samuel H. Laughlin

(Private) Nashville, Tenn. Dec. 28, 1843.

Dear Sir,

Not having the pleasure of your personal acquaintance, I ought, perhaps, to apologize for the liberty I am about to assume in addressing you this letter. Although unknown to you personally, yet I hope the interest which I know we feel in common for the success of the democracy in the approaching contest for the Presidency, will be accepted by you as a sufficient excuse if not justification for the liberty thus assumed. When you were vigorously engaged, in the full strength of manhood, in fighting the great democratic battle of 1827-8, I was, although a young man, a deeply interested spectator, and accorded all the feeble assistance I could give as a private citizen of this state, to the same great cause. I then procured and read, with attention, pleasure, and profit, "Corruption's Adversary," and other kindred productions of your pen. From that time to the present hour, I presume we have been consistent supporters of the same cause and principles. For the last ten years, I have been, in various public positions in Tennessee, almost constantly engaged in political life and pursuits. For the last six years I have served in the State Senate, where I now have a seat. In 1840 I was a member of the Democratic National Convention at Baltimore, and have been appointed by the democracy of the Congressional district in which I reside, to perform the same duty as a delegate next Spring. I was a member of our State Convention which sat in this City on the 23rd of November last; and it is

mainly in reference to the measures of this Convention, and to the present actual position of the democracy of this State, that I wish to call your attention.

In nearly all the primary meeting of the people, in nearly all the Counties and districts of the State by whom the delegates to our State Convention were appointed, resolutions were passed, and in most instances unanimously, declaring a preference for Mr. VanBuren as the democratic candidate for the Presidency. These resolutions were passed in strict accordance with the real feelings and wishes of our democracy. Such is still the feeling of our friends, and they are now interstained with renewed confidence and hope of success since the meeting and harmonious organization of the House of Representatives in Congress. The delegates to our State convention before they met, and more strongly after they met here, came to the conclusion, that notwithstanding the manifest preference which was felt and indicated by the people of our party for Mr. VanBuren, the most prudent course, and the course best calculated to allay the jealousies which had indicated themselves in several states between the supporters of the rival aspirants for the Presidency of the democratic party, and to prevent the appearance of dissention, would be to make no nomination of a candidate for the presidency – to express no preference – and to avow the clear determination, honestly and sincerely felt by all, to support the nominee of the National Convention. There had been, in a few instances, and by a few respectable individuals, and by one local border newspaper in this State, declarations made favorable to the claims of Gov. Cass before the meeting of our Convention; not, however, as preferring him as a first choice, but as being probably and possibly susceptable of being made more available in the next contest than Mr. VanBuren. But when the Convention met here, and delegates from all quarters of the State conferred fully together, all these indications disappeared; and subsequent occurrences have shown that Mr. V. B. will, almost to a certainty, be the candidate. – I need hardly say to you, that we were – as the whole democracy of the state are with their whole souls, minds and strength – in favor of Gov. Polk for the Vice Presidency.

If Ohio, after our nomination, and the nomination in Arkansas, which will be followed by nomination in Mississippi, shall nominate Gov. Polk for Vice President, in connection with Mr. VanBuren for the Presidency, it will not require the gift of prophesy to foretell that they will be the next President and Vice President of the United States. The indications abroad – in the north, east and south – and the movements at Washington, all prove to me that this would be the strongest ticket for the democracy that could be formed. With VanBuren and Polk, we can reclaim and regenerate our own fallen state. Against Clay, as the whig candidate, this ticket, if formed, will carry Tennessee by a majority not less than five or six thousand. – Although Alabama has nominated Col. King for Vice President by her Convention, it is still true that many Counties in that state, in public meetings, have nominated Polk. With Col. King, or Col. Johnson (if Col. J. should consent to be nominated

for Vice President) on our ticket in this state for Vice President, whoever may be the candidate for President, we will be badly defeated. — It has, in other states, been objected, as I have learned, by some of the friends of Mr. Buchanan and Col. Benton, that if Gov. Polk were elected Vice President in 1844, that he may set up pretensions for the Presidency in 1848. I have learned this with surprize and regret. ~~This~~ The surmise is founded in no color of truth — it is wholly groundless and false. I have known Gov. Polk intimately for more than twenty years — and I feel free to safely affirm that neither himself nor his friends have ever thought of setting up such pretensions. He is yet a young man comparatively — about forty-five or six years old; and whether Col. Benton or Mr. Buchanan, or whoever the democratic candidate for the Presidency may be in 1848, I am sure that Gov. Polk, whatever his fate may be in the next election, will be found warmly supporting instead of coming in competition. I am sure he has the highest regard for, and confidence in, both Col. Benton and Mr. Buchanan. To refuse prompt support to Gov. Polk now, upon such grounds as the above, would, I feel sure, be treating one of the most disinterested public men I have ever known, with great injustice. — I hope you, who know Gov. Polk's character, will not suffer any injustice to be done to him upon any such score as the above in your State Convention at Columbus on the "glorious 8th of January." I hope, whoever you may prefer, that you will be on the spot, or that you will take steps to aid in insuring fair play.

The Old Chief at the Hermitage was enjoying his usual health two days ago — and speaks of you with great confidence and esteem. May he live a thousand years!

I have sent to your address pamphlet copies of the proceedings of our Convention, including the Preamble and resolutions, declaring in principles. This paper was written by our friend W. H. Humphreys of this city — and only revised by the Committee, and not by Mr. Nicholson as I am Mr. Ritchie of the N. Enquirer states. I send you also in pamphlet, a copy of the address of our State corresponding Committee. This paper is the joint production of Mr. Nicholson and myself. — Please send me a pamphlet copy, as published in your city, of the Address or Speech of Mr. John Quincy Adams

made at the laying of the corner stone, or dedication of your Mount Ida (now Mount Adams) Observatory.

I hope you will excuse the freedom and frankness with which I have written, and above all, the egotism which I have found necessary to resort to in introducing myself, and some of my acts, to your notice. When corresponding with gentlemen and friends, known to be democrats of the old Jefferson-Jackson-Van Buren school, I know no other manner of writing.

In this state, come what may, the democracy will stand by and support, in all good faith, the Baltimore nominations. I shall be at the National Convention, and if you should be a delegate, I will be happy to make your personal acquaintance on the occasion. I shall remain here until the adjournment of our Leg. Assembly, which will be about the 1st of February proximo, and will be happy to hear from you at your leisure. After the adjournment, my address will be "McMinnville, Warren Co. Tenn." -

I am, sir, very respectfully,
your obt. Svt.
S. H. Laughlin.

Moses Dawson, Esq.

N.B. Of our Thirteen Delegates to the Baltimore Convention, eleven, to my certain knowledge, prefer Mr. Van Buren as their first choice. The Delegates, you will see, are left free, and without instructions by the Convention - except in being bound to abide by the nominations when made.

NASHVILLE
DEC
30
Te.

PAID

37½

Moses Dawson, Esq.
Cincinnati,
Ohio.