

PATRICK HENRY [Matthew Livingston Davis] to MVB, 15 September 1834

LETTER XIV.

Albany

Oct. 13, 1834.

Sir-

In your letter dated in the autumn of 1819, you say—"The Missouri question conceals, *so far as he (Mr. King) is concerned*, no plot, and we shall give it a true direction." This expression, until otherwise shown, must be construed to mean, that Mr King, if returned to the United States Senate, would adhere to that policy of which he had avowed himself the advocate during the preceding session of Congress. This was well known to be a determined and active opposition to the admission of Missouri into the Union, without restrictions on slavery. Mr. King had "no concealed plot," his resistance was open and bold. You, therefore, supported him knowing his views, and consequently, for the purpose of defeating the wishes and expectations of the south. Nor did that honorable gentleman disappoint you. He was elected without opposition on the meeting of the legislature, and took his seat on the 26th of January, 1820, while the Missouri subject was under consideration.

After taking his seat he called into action, as you anticipated he would, his powerful talents in debate against the south, on what was deemed by them a vital question. In your own language, "he had no concealed plot." How did you, sir, and Mr. King, at that time stand with Mr. Ritchie (now your panegyrist) and his Washington friends?

One of Mr. R's correspondents says—"Previous to Mr. King's arrival here, a spirit of compromise and conciliation seemed to be pretty generally indulged, but," &c. Again, "He (Mr. K.) has made two of the most factious and fanatical speeches ever delivered," &c. And Mr. Ritchie says, "of Mr. King we confess, we had formed a different opinion. We regarded him, though a federalist, as a high and honorable

patriot. But that time is past," &c. Thus in relation to Missouri, you was an efficient enemy of that territory, then striving to become a state, and you would now, as their pretended friend and advocate, claim their support. The direction which you intended to give the question is enveloped, in mystery.

It has been already remarked, that you were known to be the author of the pamphlet in favor of Mr. King's election. But in your letter now before me, and from which I am extracting, you avow the fact. You say, "MY CONSIDERATIONS," &c., thus quoting a part of the title. The circumstance is unimportant, except so far as it shows your zeal, at the time in favor of Mr. King, and consequently, your hostility to the admission of Missouri as a new state. You certainly have strong claims to its vote for favors conferred.

Your next remark evinces the connection that existed, at that time, between yourself and the Albany Argus. It is true, your views were suspected by Mr. Buel. There was an "*evident apprehension on his part, that you wanted to get rid of him.*" This sentence may serve to quicken the recollection of that gentleman as to his feelings in the autumn of 1819.

You say, "My Considerations, &c. and the aspect of the Argus, will show you that we have entered on the work in earnest." Here, then, is a declaration, that in pursuance of previous arrangements, you, and those connected with you in the bargain, had "entered on the work in earnest." What was that work? It was the election of Mr. King. It was the fulfilment of your contract with the federalists. The arrangement having been made in the summer of 1819, in the winter of 1820 the members of the legislature convened, not for the purpose of deliberating on the subject as faithful representatives of the people, but for the purpose "*of recording the decree of the managers.*" As an evidence of your zeal in favor of the plot, and of your sincere wish to complete the bargain, you refer your friend to the pamphlet which you had written, and to "the aspect of the Albany Argus."

Will it, after this publication, be said, that you did not then control (as you now do) the Argus? If you did not, you intended to make the impression on the mind of your friend and correspondent, that it was in your hands. In your anxiety to secure his aid you say—"We cannot therefore, look back. Let us not, therefore, have any halting. *I will put my head on its propriety.*" These extracts from your private letters are evidence, strong as holy writ, that you had not only made the contract with the federalists, but that you entertained apprehensions of failure. They almost

demonstrate, that you felt a deep interest in the completion of the bargain. Your exclamation, "*We cannot look back,*" evinces the agitation of your mind at the moment.

It is certain, that in your intercourse with Mr. King, you were well informed as to his future policy in reference to Missouri. It is known that the federal friends of that distinguished statesman were desirous of moderating his feelings on the all-absorbing subject of Missouri. They looked to him as a candidate for the presidency. They feared that he would arouse in the south, and the southwest, so much hostility as to destroy all hope of his succeeding. So far, therefore, as they could approach him, they did. You, sir, united in the effort, and, it is believed, with the same motive.

And now, sir, having "put your head on the propriety of electing Mr. King," shall it be said by you or your adherents, that you are not responsible for the course he subsequently pursued in the Senate of the U. States? You are responsible; but especially you are responsible for his policy in reference to Missouri. You understood it, and understanding it, you leagued with the federalists for its accomplishment.

Again, Sir, let me repeat the question, *who are "WE?"* Methinks, (when you read this interrogatory,) I behold that engaging smile, which occasionally plays around your lips, when chafed and goaded by untoward tidings. Must I answer for you? I reply, then, "*WE*" are the *Albany Regency*. It is to that junta you referred in the letter to your friend. If the extracts I have given does not afford evidence of a corrupt bargain, with certain leading federalists, then have I mistaken the force and meaning of language. It is not intended to charge Mr. King with having made terms and conditions; his party leaders acted for him.

I have occupied more time on this branch of the subject, than I intended; but I have considered it among the most profligate of your political operations, and was, therefore, anxious that your policy, in reference to the south, should be clearly and distinctly understood. Among your admirers, it is said, is *Col. Benton*. This development will afford him a clue to your early patriotism, and devotion to southern interests. It is not often that you can be convicted, as in the present instance, by your own written testimony.

One word as to your motives in supporting Mr. King. They were numerous. *Firstly*, You were ambitious of becoming the leader of the party. *De Witt Clinton* was in your way. By conciliating distinguished federalists, you intended to lay the foundation of a

new party. Your sustaining Mr. King was well calculated to produce that effect. This may be alluded to hereafter.

Secondly, you were anxious to obtain a seat in the Senate of the U. States. Mr. Sandford's time of service would soon expire; by elevating Mr. King, your chance of success, in supporting Mr. Sandford would be increased; because, both the Senators would be residents of the southern district, and this fact could be urged in favor of a change, and thus far in your favor.

Thirdly, and although last, probably not the least consideration was, your great desire to be introduced into what is termed "*good society*." It is truly ridiculous to listen to your hireling and mercenary pander on this subject. Through Mr. King you hoped to accomplish this object, which it is well known was near to your heart.

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