

Richard Gilliam Dunlap to Andrew Jackson, August 10, 1831, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

GENERAL RICHARD G. DUNLAP TO JACKSON.

Knoxville, Tenn. , August 10, 1831.

Private.

Dear Sir, Your letter of the 18th of July reach,d me on the eve of our elections—my engagements forbid me to take time to answer sooner. It now gives me pleasure to write in full, and in doing so I frankly confess that the kind feelings of your heart, so generously and openly avowed for your friends, which are so characteristic of the whole tenor of your life, merits and call up all my admiration for such noble friendship. Yes, this display of inflexible kindness almost conquers my objections to the continuance in office of the persons alluded to, and were I to consult my heart alone, and not your usefulness to my Country I would not murmur longer, but cherish the indulgence of your fidelity to friends that hold them around you.

I presume that Majr Eaton is a gentleman with a good heart and much better attainments and talent than his friends general[ly] award him.¹ But publick opinion seemed to rise in Judgement against his continuance in the war department, and this was the reason why I supposed he retired by the *consent of all parties*. Majr Eaton's Claims may not have merited this invitation, nor shall I pretend they did, but as the ruler of a free people I believed it to be better for you to obey the publick voice, and have men around you who could and would not only discharge the several duties of the different departments, but at the same time strengthen by their relation to the Country, the hopes of every patriot. This

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principle would give you aid, and not divide the popular usefulness of your name, between your cabinet and officers, and the leading measures of your administration. Fitness for responsible stations with the entire capacity to act out all incumbent duties, are not the only requisites, in popular Governments—the publick must have confidence, to ensure that approving support so essential to any administration.

1 Van Buren said, “Major Eaton was a man of moderate intellectual capacities but justly distinguished for the kindness, generosity and unobtrusiveness of his disposition and demeanour”. Van Buren's *Autobiography*, p. 352.

I wish Majr Eaton all the joy and happiness in his retirement that can fall to the lot of any man. I am for my Country and not against him. As for Majr Lewis I am well advised that his Connection with you *does* and *has* and *will* affect you in Tennessee. Whether the fact be true or false (for one I do not believe that he has the influence attributed to him) the consequences are the same in publick opinion, and it is due to your own fame to your friends and Country to dispell the suspicions of the times. Mr Lewis is too feeble a man to have this station before the American people, suppose his heart to be as pure as angels. His friendship for you none will doubt. His supposed interference in elections *all must* to say the least against him doubt. This is the opinion that prevails, that Majr Lewis is your confidential friend and the fact that he lives with you,² give countenance to the charge that what he does is by your advice—you can readily

2 Whether as a result of this protest or not, Major Lewis moved his quarters from the White House Dec. 3, 1831. See also Balch to Jackson, July 21, 1831, *ante*.

my dear sir see the awfull effect of such suspicions, no less than a desire on the part of the executive to controll the elective franchise. No man in this nation I am satisfied would denounce and abhor such interference more than yourself.

Writing as I do for your ear, I feel bound to speak not alone for myself but what I know to be the opinion in Tennessee of your *most devoted* friends. I cannot and will not complain

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to you if you should act for these gentlemen and mantle them in the influence of your name, as I know the pure fountain from which your confidence in their usefulness and fidelity to you rises. All that I could do or would do, would be to hope that the publick had the same reason, that guides your generous feelings, to instruct the Country of their usefulness to you or your administration. I will quit this unpleasant theme with this assurance that my confidence is not in the least impaired in your unwavering patriotism nor in the final result of the publick usefulness of your administration, yet sir these little matters have had their effect in this district and I fear beat Mr Lea by a *Second Benedict*.
. . . .3

3 Referring to Thomas D. Arnold, M. C. from Tennessee 1831–1833.