

Melville to Hedderley

Walmer 22 March 1803.

Copy

My Dear Sir.

I arrived here Sunday morning, & found Mr Pitt very much improved in point of health beyond what I expected. He is alone & of course I found no interruption in conversing with him on the various topics touch'd upon in my interview with you last Friday. As matter of private gratification, Mr Pitt has the reverse of any wish to return to official situation, & if the present Administration prove themselves in the present circumstances of the Country, competent to carry on its Government with reasonable prospects of success, & are determin'd afterwards to adhere to those leading principles of foreign & domestic Policy, which he has long considered as material, his wishes to be able out of office to support them are precisely the same they were at their first formation. He does not however disguise from me that many things have occurred both in relation to their transactions with foreign powers / so far as he has the means of Judging of them / & with regard to the financial operations & Statements of the Treasury as to have given him sincere concern; & if it were not under the circumstances of the present critical moment of the Country, he doubts how far considering the connection he has had for these many

years with the financial affairs of the Country
He was at liberty to keep back so long from distinctly
stating to the public the fatal errors which he is
satisfied exist in the statement made with regard
to the amount of the National revenue compared
with the charges upon it. as things now stand
He is induced from all these considerations for the
present at least, to adhere to the resolution of
continuing his residence where he is, & refraining
from taking any part in the discussions of Parliament.

I did not conceal from him the idea you
mentioned of his returning to a share of the
Government, with a Person of Rank & consideration
at the head of it perfectly agreeable to him, & I even
specified the Person you had named; but there
was no room for discussion on that part of the subject,
for he stated at once without reserve or affectation
his feelings with regard to any proposition founded
on such a basis. The uncertain state of his health
makes him still doubt how far, on any call, he could
be justified in undertaking a lead in public affairs
under the difficulties now existing or impending.
The moment of a negotiation still in suspense, he
thinks in every view unfit for his taking part, but
in any event, nothing could induce him to come
forward except an urgent sense of public duty, & a
distinct knowledge that his services / such as they
may be / are wished & thought of essential both in the
highest quarter, & by all those with whom / in

consequence of any arrangement that might be formed on that ground / He might have to act confidentially. He is firmly of opinion that he would not on this supposition have any chance of answering his own Idea of being usefull to the country in one of the great points on which he lays a principal stress but by returning to the management of the Finances.

Besides this consideration He stated not less pointedly & decidedly his sentiments with regard to the absolute necessity there is in the conduct of the affairs of this country, that there should be an avowed & real Minister, possessing the chief weight in the Council & the principal place in the confidence of the King. In that respect there can be no rivalry or division of power. That power must rest in the Person generally called first Minister, & that Minister ought, he thinks, to be the Person immediately at the head of the finances. He knows to his own comfortable experience that notwithstanding the abstract truth of this general proposition, it is no ways incompatible with the most cordial concert & mutual exchange of advice & intercourse amongst the different members of Government & different branches of executive departments, but still, if it should come unfortunately to such a radical difference of opinion that no spirit of conciliation or concession can reconcile the sentiments of the Minister must be allowed & understood to prevail, leaving the other members of Administration to act as they may —

conceive themselves conscientiously called upon to
act under such circumstances. During the last
Administration such a collision of opinion I believe
scarcely ever happened, or at least was not such as the
Parties felt themselves obliged to push to extremities,
but still it is possible, & the only remedy applicable
to it, is solely in the principle which I have explained.

In a conversation of two days, which involved
in it the discussion of such a variety of topics, it is
impossible to give you more than an abstract, or very
general outline of the heads of our conversation. I have
made it merely a recital, not intermix'd with any
Comments, opinions, or suggestions of my own.
You expressed a wish to hear from me without any
delay, & I trust the explanation I have given you
is perfectly sufficient to convey to you such a
view of the subject as may enable you to draw
your own conclusion & regulate your own determination

sign'd (Melville)

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Letter from A. M. Melville
to Mr. Addington
dated 22 March 1803

No. 1.

The Right Hon^{ble} Henry Addington.