

Ld. Mowra to Col. Ke Mahon

June 15 1797

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Warrington, June 15. 1797.

My Dear General

The information which you have given to me, of the reports circulating with regard to the late political negotiations, is in one respect material. It confirms a suspicion which had occurred to me that it was an object to have me thought disposed towards such a coalition: had the truth, which I had not seen before you transmitted it, exceedingly strengthened the supposition. If I have left room for those

...various statements by not proclaiming to all the
World the arrangement that was in view, it did
not proceed from my not having taken a precise
& defined line. Still less did it arise from any
notion of advantage in concealment. For the Gen-
-tlemen with whom I conferred had not any per-
-pose which they wished to disguise, & I thought
right that they not to give an appearance of intrigue
to the business by any affectation of secrecy. Indeed,
I know that some of them declared their intention
very openly to the persons most concerned, the King-
-ters, which, perhaps, has facilitated the attempt of

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throwing a color of collusion on the plan. My sole rea-
-son for not talking more openly on what was in con-
-templation, was, that I had declined being a prin-
-cipal mover in the business, & that I thought it
would have an air of vanity if I proclaimed the
flattering remembrance of so many respectable cha-
-racters to me. It was before Easter that some
Members of the House of Commons (not those who used
to meet at Sir John Sinclair's) sent to ask for an
opportunity of conversing with me on political topics.
When we met, they said that a considerable num-
-ber of the Independent Members, who had hitherto
voted with Administration, saw with excessive alarm

the difficulties into which the Country had been plunged
& which could not but increase rapidly unless adequate
remedy were immediately applied. They added, that they
had reflected on the nature of that remedy; & were con-
vinced that a change of Ministry must be the first
step towards it: In consequence of which, they had come
together, & had determined to fix their confidence
upon me. They then requested that I would endeavour,
on the assurance of their support, to form an Admin-
-stration on the principle of excluding persons who
had on either side made themselves obnoxious to
the Public. As I saw the dangers of the Country in the
same light that they did, & believed that nothing
could dispel them but the calling forth the general

confidence of the Nation, I could not dissent from the Theory
of their plan. The Execution of it, however, I deemed imprac-
-table. I stated to them the impossibility of their overpow-
-ing the adherents of both Mr Pitt & Mr Fox: On which account
I strenuously recommended that they should attempt to form
with Mr Fox's Party an Alliance that might be satisfactory
to themselves & to the Country; by discussing, and (when accepted)
advising to strict engagement, the extent of measures
which Mr Fox when brought into Office by them would pro-
-pose. The Gentlemen said that many of their Friends had
taken so strong a part against Mr Fox, & others had
such a prejudice against him, that they had not any
hope of bringing my proposition to bear with them. I repeated
my reasoning as earnestly as possible, & prevailed upon the
Gentlemen to say they would recommend the suggestion to the

consideration of their comrades. I pushed the cause upon many
of them individually afterwards: but I went out of course. Public
opinion growing more gloomy in their aspect every day, I received
letters from some of those gentlemen containing such reasons
- hence or by absence that I returned directly to London.
The persons with whom I had before conferred came to me
as soon as they heard I was arrived. They told me that the
- influence of their party to the King was insurmountable. But
that a sense of the extreme peril to which the State
was exposed had become so general as to make it clear
that a majority of the H of Commons would be for a new
- constitution, & they produced a very long list indeed of names
- but, containing names of the greatest weight in the Country, who
wished that I should stand at their head. I explained to the gen-
- tlemen that to make myself the Chief of a Party would do more

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mit me than it would become them to enrol themselves under
me - That, tho' I must be flattered very highly at being thought
of such passages equal to the guidance of affairs in so formi-
-dable a crisis, the situation to which they destined me was
not ineligible for me - That I would notwithstanding not shrink
from it, if my acceptance of it would be regarded by His Ma-
-jesty as an act of duty & by the Public as an act of Zeal
- That, to remove such a construction, I must not enter into
any management or intrigue, but that the business must be
done by their open & early declaration of what they thought
necessary for the public interest in such an exigency.

I suspect that Mr Fox obtained information of the con-
-tents of these gentlemen, and thence, with that elevated
disinterestedness & honest anxiety for the National Welfare
which guides all his actions, determined by the sacrifice

of his own pretensions to remove every obstacle from an arrangement
which he thought might be productive of good to the Country. This
step did indeed appear to favour the views of the Independent
Members: For it seemed to call upon Ministers to show an equal
degree of public spirit & to retire from stations which they could
no longer fill with benefit to the Empire. It was understood
that they felt it so, but on that supposition the Independent
Members made a more pointed application to see whether any
body had been designated for any particular office but Sir
Pultney. He further had said that he was the person whom
they should be most gratified in seeing Chancellor of the
Exchequer: had I had proposed to him & to him that there
was not any person with whom I could act more confidentially
from what I have mentioned, however, you will see that
it was not in the contemplation of my friends to have an
administration formed by a junction with the majority of the ^{present}

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Cabinet. One person, indeed, had observed to me that if
Mr Pitt & Lord Grenville were displaced, the remainder of
the Cabinet would suit my purposes as well as any I have
I could find: but I directly met that suggestion by a Decla-
-ration that nothing could induce me to go into Office
upon terms of that nature. The introduction of Lord Shelburne
& Mr. Pulteney ~~as~~ ^{myself} into that Cabinet could not af-
-fect the Public of a change of system: had it was re-
-spected that in the very act the confidence of
the Public should attach itself to our principles. I
could, therefore, have nothing equivocal. Without reas-
-ing to proscribte individuals, there are certain points in
which we must not falter. I can not ever sit in a Cabinet
with the Duke of Portland. He appears to me to have done more

injury to the Constitution, & to the Estimation of the Higher Rank
in this Country, than any Man on the political Stage. By his union
with Mr Pitt, he has given it to be understood by the People
that either all the constitutional changes which he & his
Friends for so many years urged against Mr Pitt were grounded
on that being what there was no difficulty in waiving them
when a convenient partition of Power & Privileges was pro-
posed. In either case, the People must infer that the consti-
tutional principle which can be so played with, is unim-
portant; & that Parliamentary Resolutions are no security.
Were I to connect myself with the Duke of Rutland, I must
incur the imputation of similar laxity: And I must thereby
forfeit any claim to a confidence without which I could not
be of any use; when nothing but the hope of being of use
could make us for a moment listen to a proposal for under-

taking office. My wish was to procure for colleagues many
 of those who had been acting in concert with the King. And
 it was obvious that the step which he had taken was
 generously intended to leave them at liberty to join as
 unconnected individuals in a new Administration. In this
 my friends (of whom not one aimed at office) entirely concurred
 and; saying that, if I continued responsible to them for
 measures, I might take what men I chose. Those mea-
 sures had been readily adjusted between us. For when I
 detailed to them further on the plan on which alone
 I would undertake the management of affairs, we
 found that we were in perfect agreement. I had
 stated that I must decline entering in, unless His Majesty
 should graciously consent to these three conditions - an
 endeavor to procure immediate Peace - the pacification of

Ireland by a just & lenient system of Government - and
full disclosure to the Nation as to the extent of our Finan-
-cial Difficulties, in order to justify the call for those
heavy contributions that would be requisite to re-estab-
-lish Credit. Of my Friends, I demanded this condition: That
no removals should be made in the House of Commons, Post Office
-Office, or any other Department not immediately con-
-nected with Ministerial Functions. To this they were un-
-willingly assented. My view was, to profess that I would not
-form to myself a Party; and that, as I had un-
-derstood from the critical situation of Public Affairs, consented
-to undertake a business foreign to the line of life which
-I had proposed to myself, I should consider it a fa-
-vourable release whenever His Majesty or Parliament should

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think some other person fitter for the station. With the
reasons by which the change of Administration was
to be brought about, I was to have no concern. The sen-
timent of the Independent Members was indeed not other
than as some channel was necessary for the trans-
mission of their joint opinion: but in this I took no further
part. In pursuance of my system, I declined re-
-maining in London; but from constant communi-
-cations, the matter should degenerate into political
intrigue. I have given you this long detail that
you may be empowered to contradict any misstatements
that you hear: but you are perfectly welcome to
show the letter to any respectable Man of any Party;

as there was not a point throughout the business which I
or any of those with whom I conferred, need wish to conceal.
Not a single Man of those who opposed me of their support
was hinted at a private object, such as I suggested any
thing like a condition. You say that Mr Sheridan
has been traduced as wishing to abandon Mr Fox, & to
promote a new Administration. I had accidentally a
conversation with that gentleman at the House of
Lords. I remonstrated strongly with him against a
principle which I heard Mr Fox's Friends intended to
lay over, namely, that they would support a new Admin-
-stration, but that not any of them would take part in
it. I solemnly declare upon my Honor that I could
not shake Mr Sheridan's assertion of the propriety of

that determination. He said that he & Mr Fox's
 other friends, as well as Mr Fox himself, would give
 the most energetic support to such an Administration
 as was in contemplation. But that their acceptance
 of office would appear as acquiescence under the
 injustice of the interdict imposed to be paid upon
 Mr Fox. I did not, & never can, admit the fairness
 of that argument: but I gained nothing upon Mr
 Sheridan, to whose uprightess in that respect I can
 therefore bear the most decisive testimony. Had I
 been asked of offering a testimony whose suspicion
 ought not to be conceived. I consider the whole
 of this political reprobation as completely extinct.

and, feeling my escape from a hazardous & unplea-
-sant situation, I enjoy the consciousness of not
having shirked in an unworthy manner from any
responsibility in a case where it was thought I
might be useful to the community.

Yours, My Dear Sir,
& believe me faithfully
Yours
John 15. 1797.

Charles M. Jackson.