

Washington 29 Decr. 1831.

(Confidential)

My good friend,

I have this moment recd. your letter of the 9 Inst, and let me entreat you to moderate your feelings, with regard to Secretary M Lane's Report. You should recollect that he is required, by Law, to report to Congress – not to the President as the other Secretaries do. He therefore speaks his own sentiments — not the opinions of the President or any other person. Mr. M Lane is an honest man, and a sincere friend to the General — he is a frank & fearless man, and scorns to conceal his opinions. He is a consistent politician — always having been an open advocate of the Bank – and before he accepted his present situation, he candidly made known his opinions & views to the President, who, notwithstanding what his enemies say, can tolerate an honest difference of opinion. It would, therefore, under these circumstances, my friend, be unjust to require of Mr. M Lane, as intimated by you, that he should withdraw from the Department over which he presides. Altho Mr. M Lanes Report is not approved by the majority of the Presidents friends, yet it meets the approbation

of many of his best and most devoted friends; and particularly in the Democratic State of Pennsylvania. He does conscienciously believe that the best interest of the Country requires some such Institution as the present Bank — the Treasury operations, moreover, he thinks cannot be safely managed without it. Believing these to be facts, he felt it to be his imperious duty to give to Congress his views upon that important Financial question. In doing so he speaks but his own sentiments— he disclaims, in his Report, the intention of speaking for any other person. There is one thing, my dear sir, very remarkable, with regard to the Treasury Department— Every Secretary, ~~at its head~~, I believe, including the Republican Administrations of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, &, if you please, Jackson, has been in favour of a National Bank, from a conviction of the impossibility of managing the financial affairs of the Country without it.

I know of no change of in the Presidents mind upon the subject of the Bank; and, if the friends of that Institution should be so foolish as to make up an issue between him and it, Mr. M Lane will be found standing as firmly as any other friend, by the side of the President. The Secretary is decidedly opposed to taking up the subject this present session, and I understand, from good authority, that he has said to the Bank, if they or their friends in Congress, attempt

to press upon the President a Bill to recharter it in any shape, however modified, he will as one of the Constitutional Advisers of the President, advise him to veto it. He is not willing to see it become, he says, a political engine— thereby verifying every think that has been said of it by those opposed to it — He looks at it in the light of a financial question only. If the subject is touched at all this session, it will be by the opposition, without the consent of the Bank, for the purpose of wielding its influence in some shape against the President.

You enquire of me how Congress stands with regard to the Bank. It is impossible for any one, at present, to tell. The friends of that Institution, however, claim large majorities in both Houses. I incline to the belief there are majorities both in the Senate & House of Representatives, but I think, on trial of strength, it will be found they are not large. I repeat it is, my opinion, however, that the friends of the Bank will not press the matter this session — and permit me to say, as an additional reason for thinking so, that many of the Presidents best friends in Congress are Bankmen, who will not consent to touch that subject until after the next Presidential election.

With regard to Mr. M Lane, himself, I would

advise you, from considerations of policy, to handle him and his Report as tenderly as the case will admit of. The President and his friends, here, are very much attached to him. He posses{es} splendid talents and has done the State some service, ~~and~~ is a man of unsullied honor, and of consistent principles— of Candor & of frankness. Such of our friends as do not like the Report, must stand firmly upon the Message — that is the Presidents own, and will bear the teste. If His Bank friend, and he has many of them, prefer Mr. M Lane's views with regard to that Institution, why should we complain. People you know, my friend, will differ in Opinion— it is a privilege— a glorious one — secured by the Consitution. Altho our friends materially differ with regard to the necessity of having a Bank at all, yet they all concur in the opinion that the present should not be rechartered without essential modification.

With my best wishes for your health, happiness, & prosperity I am,
dear Sir,

Sincerely your friend
W B Lewis