Confidential

Milwaukee Wis. April 5th 1861.

Dear Sir,

At our last interview I took the liberty of asking permission to write you confidential letters about the state of public opinion in the country. The result of the recent elections tells the story so clearly and forcibly that it is almost unnecessary to add anything. On my way home I have seen New York merchants, New England manufacturers and traders and farmers of the West, and from personal observation I may say that there is a general discontent pervading all classes of society. Everybody asks: What is the policy of the Administration? And everybody replies: Any distinct line of policy, be it war or a recognition of the southern confederacy, would be better than this uncertain state of things. Our defeat at the recent elections has taught us a lesson which can hardly be misunderstood. The Republicans are disheartened, groping in the dark, not knowing whether to support or to oppose the Administration. The Democrats are encouraged by the apparent indecision and vasillation of the government and the divisions in our own ranks, and availing themselves of the general discontent and confusion carry everything before them.

Meanwhile foreign governments seem to take advantage of our difficulties; the Spanish invasion of San Domingo is an indication of what we may expect. Thus dissension within and aggression from without. It seems to me there is but one way out of this distressing situation. It is to make short work of the secession movement and then to make front against the world abroad. How this can be done? By adopting the promptest and the most vigorous measures for the execution of the policy indicated in your Inaugural. The government is not weak. It possesses all the power it wants. As soon as one vigorous blow is struck, as soon as, for instance, Fort Sumter is reinforced, public opinion in the free states will at once rally to your support. Remember that at one time the people of the North were unanimous; it was when Major Anderson took possession of Sumter. It will be so again the very moment the Administration discloses a decided and vigorous policy. There is no doubt of it. Never fear the border-states. They speculate upon the weakness of the Government. Every display of strength will disconcert and overawe them.

Some time ago you told me, that you did not want to call an extra-session of Congress for fear of reopening the compromise-agitation. You were undoubtedly right then. But any vigorous act on the
part of your Administration, any display of power and courage will remove that danger. If you first reinforce the forts and then call Congress together, the enthusiasm of the masses will be so great and overwhelming, that Congress will be obliged to give you any legislation you may ask for. You will be master of the situation, and supported by the confidence of the people, the government will be stronger than it ever was before. But on the other hand, if an undecided vacillating policy is followed, we shall be beaten in most of the Northern states at the fall-elections, and your administration will be at the mercy of democratic demagoguism—

What I write to you, my dear sir, comes from the fulness of my heart. I am not only more ardently devoted to our common cause, but also bound to you with the strongest ties of personal friendship and gratitude. You know that, and I wish you would so interpret my words.

Yesterday I wrote a few lines to Gov. Seward concerning the appointment of my Secretary of Legation. When I came home I found to my agreeable surprise, that Mr. Paine, whose appointment I desire, does not only understand German and French, but has for years been studying the Spanish language and reads it with great fluency and ease. If you should be willing to make the appointment, and for the sake of the public service I most ardently wish you will do so, please let it be done as soon as possible.¹ Mr. Paine will want a little time to arrange his private affairs, and it is important that he should start with me.

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1 Horatio J. Perry was appointed secretary of the legation.

Permit me to repeat, that the relation between minister and secretary ought to be a confidential one, and that a want of confidence and good understanding would necessarily be detrimental to the service. I would therefore again entreat you, not to appoint a man with whom I am not well acquainted. It is my sincerest and highest wish to justify the confidence you have reposed in me, and for this reason and no other I am so urgent in this matter.

Truly and faithfully yours

C. Schurz.