

MONDAY, 11th May, 1846.— I refused to see company generally this morning. I carefully revised my message on the Mexican question, but had no time to read the copies of the correspondence furnished by the War & State Departments which was to accompany it. I had read the original correspondence and presume the copies are correct.

I addressed [notes] to Senators Cass and Benton this morning requesting them to call. Gen'l Cass called first. The message was read to him and he highly approved it. Col. Benton called before Gen'l Cass left, and I gave him the copy of the message and he retired to an adjoining room and read it. After he had read it I had a conversation with him alone. I found he did not approve it in all its parts. He was willing to vote men and money for defence of our territory, but was not prepared to make aggressive war on Mexico. He disapproved the marching of the army from Corpus Christi to the left Bank of the Del Norte, but said he had never said so to the public. I had a full conversation with him, and he left without satisfying me that I could rely upon his support of the measures recommended by the message, further than the mere defence of our territory. I inferred, too, from his conversation that he did not think the territory of the U. S. extended West of the Nueces River.

At 12 O'Clock I sent my message<sup>1</sup> to Congress.

<sup>1</sup> Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV, 437.

It was a day of great anxiety with me. Between 5 & 6 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Slidell, U. S. Minister to Mexico, called and informed me that the Ho. Repts. had passed a Bill carrying out all the recommendations of the message by a vote of 173 ayes to 14 noes, and that the Senate had adjourned after a debate without coming to any decision.

My Private Secretary brought me a note from Col. Benton desiring information as to the number of men and amount of money required to defend the country. There was nothing in his note to commit him to any course of policy beyond what he had intimated in his conversation this morning. My Private Secretary informed me that Col. Benton would call for an answer at 8 O'Clock this evening. I immediately sent his note to the Secretary of War and requested him to call at that hour. The Secretaries of War and State called a few minutes before 8 O'Clock but before I had consulted him [the former] in relation to Col. Benton's note, Col. Benton came in. I told Col. B. that the Secretary of War had just come in & that I had no opportunity to consult him on the subject of his note. I told him that my own opinion was that it was at present impossible to say what number of troops would be wanted, and that until Congress acted I could not tell what authority would be given to the Executive; but that if the Bill which had passed the House to-day should also pass the Senate, no more men would be called out and no more money expended than would be absolutely necessary to bring the present state of hostilities to an end. I told him if the war [was] recognized by Congress, that with

a large force on land and sea I thought it could be speedily terminated. Col. B. said that the Ho. Repts. had passed a Bill to-day declaring war in two hours, and that one and [a] half hours of that time had been occupied in reading the documents which accompanied my message, and that in his opinion in the 19th Century war should not be declared without full discussion and much more consideration than had been given to it in the Ho. Repts. Mr. Buchanan then remarked that War already existed by the act of Mexico herself & therefore it did not require much deliberation to satisfy all that we ought promptly and vigorously to meet [it]. Mr. Marcy and Mr. Buchanan discussed the subject for some time with Mr. Benton, but without any change of the opinions which he had expressed to me in conversation this morning. I saw it was useless to debate the subject further with him & therefore I abstained from engaging further in the conversation. After remaining near an hour Col. Benton left. Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Marcy, and myself were perfectly satisfied that he would oppose the Bill which had passed the House to-day, and that if the Whigs on party grounds acted with him the Bill might be defeated.

Gov. Yell of Arkansas, Senator Houston, & other members of Congress called in in the course of the evening, and were highly gratified at the action of the House in passing the Bill by so overwhelming a majority. The part taken by Mr. Calhoun in the Senate to-day satisfies me that he too will oppose the Bill passed by the House to-day if he thinks he can

do so safely in reference to public opinion. The Whigs in the Senate will oppose it on party grounds probably, if they can get Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Benton, and two or three other Senators professing to belong to the Democratic party to join them, so as to make a majority against the Bill. Should the Bill be defeated by such a combination, the professed Democratic members who by their votes aid in rejecting it will owe a heavy responsibility not only to their party but to the country. I am fully satisfied that all that can save the Bill in the Senate is the fear of the people by the few Democratic Senators who wish it defeated.