

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Joseph P. Bradley and Marcus L. Ward to Abraham Lincoln<sup>1</sup>, July 2, 1863

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1 ID: Marcus L. Ward was a New Jersey politician and philanthropist who helped establish a hospital and pension bureau for Civil War soldiers. In 1862, Ward ran for governor on the Republican ticket and was defeated by Joel Parker. Ward ran again in 1865 and was successful. After serving one term as governor (1866-69), Ward served a term in Congress (1873-75) before leaving public life.

Trenton, July 2nd. 1863—

Sir,

We think that the assignment of Gen. McLellan to the command of the Department of the Delaware — to include (say) New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania — could it be done without involving danger to the public interests in a way unknown to us — would be a stroke of great policy on the part of the administration, in a national, not a party, point of view. Thousands would flock to his standard — for the term of the war, if desired, who now will only come forth as they may be dragged forth by the conscription. The edge of party feeling would be turned. The administration would not lose, it would gain, in public favor.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Following the Union defeat at Chancellorsville in May, 1863, Lincoln received numerous letters, telegrams and petitions which urged him to reappoint General George B. McClellan to a position of command. Though Lincoln did not respond to Ward and Bradley, he had recently written Alexander K. McClure in response to a similar request. In his reply to McClure, Lincoln wrote that reappointing McClellan would be like “opening one leak to stop another.” See *Collected Works*, VI, 311.

Genl. McLellan is certainly the ablest engineer we could get to protect the Northern and Middle States from such disgraceful raids as that now making by Lee. An army in reserve at the North, under him, would unlimber the energies of the Army of the Potomac. We need here some man here, having public confidence, to direct and control, from a central point of view, the operations necessary to protect the fords of the Susquehanna and Delaware, and the mountain passes, to organize, as required, extempore gun boats for patrolling the rivers, to direct the movements of public and railroad property in order to ensure its safety and its greatest utility as means of defence; and, generally, to unite and centralize, the efforts made to that end.

In all these matters of this kind, his Gen. McL's talents would be very usefully employed. It is a pity to see talent that might be of service to the country entirely lain aside—

These views are entertained by a large number of the friends of the administration in this state.— If the President has any well grounded distrust of Genl McLellan's loyalty — that is another thing. Of course, what we suggest is based on the hypothesis, that no such distrust exists. We are fully aware of the embarrassments of the Presidents situation, and would not add to them. But if there be nothing in the way of this appointment but the antipathy of certain cliques we are strong in the conviction that it would subserve the public interest.

Nothing here said is intended to impeach the wisdom of Gen McL's removal from the head of the army of operation on the Potomac. That was a measure based on its own peculiar considerations, which, we presume, have nothing to do with the present proposition. What we mean to urge is simply this, that for certain departments of military duty Genl McLellan has talents of the highest order. This department of territory is the precise theatre for calling those talents into exercise— Circumstances exist which make it highly expedient to put him here; political animosities, that would be allayed — apathy for volunteering, which would be removed — a strong reserve force — (say 150000 men) that is required by the public safety, and other things already referred to—

We sincerely hope that the President has no knowledge of any circumstances relating to Gen McL's moral fitness for the position which would outweigh these considerations. If there are such, of course, we have nothing further to say on the subject—

Respectfully Your obedt Servants

Marcus L. Ward

Joseph P. Bradley