

Phelps Documents – Political, 1864

A letter written on February 17th, 1864 from John W Stedman, a printer from Norwich, Conn., to Gen. E.A. Phelps.

My dear General –

Yours of the 13th has just reached me by way of Norwich, Vermont.

There is no chance for disagreement between us about the coming campaign. Your views tally with mine to a notch. Judge Seymour has not iron enough in his blood, but there can be no mistaking the signs that he is the man for the occasion. Judge Henry says he shall decline peremptorily to allow his name to be used, and if he holds out in this opinion, then Waldo is the man to take his place. The balance of the ticket may stand as it is. I expect a contest over the platform, which in my opinion is all very ridiculous. I would have a short platform which should be simply an invitation to all honest and patriotic men to combine and drive from power the abolitionist thieves and fools who are now robbing and ruining the country. There is no sense in demanding peace, for the administration has a lease of twelve months of power, and have all the appliances of war, which cannot be taken from them, and they will use them. There is no sense in demanding a vigorous prosecution of the war, for that is simply resolving in favor of permitting water to run downhill. We can say nothing either way that will have the slightest effect either for peace or war. Our position was clearly defined last year, and if it is not understood, it is too late now for explanation.

The great and only want of the country is a change of administration, national and state, and this change must be brought about by exposing the infamous character of the man now in power. I hope you will agree with me in this, and that we can arrange matters of this kind amicably outside of the convention.

When the good old ship of state is being driven upon the breakers, don't let us waste our time in discussing the best methods of shipbuilding, but let us drive the drunken crew below, and the idiotic pilot from the wheel, and save the ship first.

I expect to meet you at the [Tontine ?] next Tuesday, and shall hope to have a good old fashioned sit-down with you. I know it will do me a great deal of good. I want to see you and I want to see Mrs. Phelps, and Mrs. S. joins me in this more heartily than you are aware of.

And now I pledge you that if our lives are spared, the coming season shall not pass away without our desire in this respect being gratified. My wife and sister wish to be most affectionately remembered to Mrs. P. and of yourself, and I unite in this with all my heart, not forgetting the little boy.

Your friend

John W. Stedman