

Document 1:

Written by Alexander Hamilton in the Gazette of the United States

August 11, 1792.

Facts, Mr. Fenno, speak louder than words, and, under certain circumstances, louder than oaths. The editor of the National Gazette must not think to swear away their efficacy. If he is truly, as they announce, the pensioned tool of the public character who has been named, no violation of truth in any shape ought to astonish; equivocations and mental reservations are the too common refuge of minds struggling to escape from disgraceful imputations.

It may be very true, in a literal sense, that no negotiation was ever opened with Mr. Freneau by Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, and yet it may be very certain, that a negotiation was opened with him, directly or circuitously, by a particular friend<sup>1</sup> of that officer, and expectation given of his patronage and encouragement.

It may be very true, in the same sense, that Mr. Freneau's coming to the city of Philadelphia, as publisher of a newspaper, was at no time urged, advised, or influenced, by the same officer, and yet it may be equally a fact, that it was urged, advised, and influenced by a friend of his, in concert with him, and to answer his views, and with authority to engage his assistance and support. It may in the strictest sense be true, that Mr. Freneau's coming to Philadelphia was his own voluntary act; and yet true that he came from interested motives, and to do the work of a party; for a man acts not the less voluntarily because he yields to considerations of interest. It may be even true, that the editor of the National Gazette was never either directed, controlled, or attempted to be influenced in any manner, either by the Secretary of State, or any of his friends; and yet it may, in the strongest sense, be true, that under the influence of the emoluments received from that officer, he has acted in precise conformity to his known principles and views.

As to the assertion, that not a single line in the National Gazette was ever, directly or indirectly, written, dictated, or composed for it, by the Secretary of State, it is a shocking instance of rashness and levity. Unless Mr. Freneau be himself the author of every line which has been contained in every one of his papers (a thing not to be believed), it is impossible that he can know that none has ever been directly or indirectly written, dictated, or composed by the officer in question. And if he had been as scrupulous about an oath as he ought to have been, he never could have sworn so positively as he has done, to a thing which it was impossible for him

to know; temerity like this would invalidate his testimony in a court of justice, if he were even, as he is not in the present case, a disinterested witness.

No, Mr. Freneau, this is not the way to exculpate yourself before a judicious public, from the conclusions which are to be drawn from the most convincing facts. Nor can it be believed, from any thing that you have either sworn or said, that the whole of what has been alleged is "a lie."

The material facts which have been alleged, and may be added in confirmation, are either acknowledged, or such as you dare not deny; and they prove decisively your improper connection with the Secretary of State, and the influence of that connection upon your press.

It is a fact which you have acknowledged, that you receive a regular salary from the Secretary of State, as clerk in his department for foreign languages, while you pretend not to act in any other capacity than that of translator of one foreign language.

It is a fact which you tacitly concede, that you came from New York, where you were in the capacity of an editor or director of a newspaper, to become in this city editor of the National Gazette.

It is a fact which you dare not deny, that your appointment as clerk for foreign languages was contemporary with or rather antecedent to the commencement of your paper. The first number of your paper is dated 31st of October, 1791, your appointment was announced in the Daily Advertiser of October 26, 1791 (a paper printed in New York), in the following terms: "We hear from Philadelphia that the Hon. Thomas Jefferson, Esq., Secretary of State for the United States, has appointed Captain Philip Freneau, interpreter of the French language for the Department of State."

It is a fact, which the debates in the Virginia Convention will testify, that Mr. Jefferson was in the origin opposed to the present Constitution of the United States.

It is a fact known to every man who approaches that officer (for he takes no pains to conceal it, and will not thank you to deny it), that he arraigns the principal measures of the government, and it may be added, with indiscreet if not indecent warmth.

It is a fact which results from the whole complexion of your paper, that it is a paper intemperatively devoted to the abuse of the government, and all the conspicuous actors in it, except the Secretary of State and his coadjutors, who are the constant theme of your panegyric. Even the illustrious Patriot who presides at the head of the government has not escaped your envenomed shafts.

And from these facts the inferences which have been drawn are irresistible.

The circumstances of your having come from another State to set up and conduct a new paper; the circumstance of the editor of that new paper being appointed a clerk in the Department of State; the coincidence in point of time of that appointment with the commencement of your paper, or, to speak more correctly, its precedency; the conformity between the complexion of your paper, and the known politics of the head of the department who employed you,—these circumstances, collectively, leave no doubt of your true situation; the conviction arising from them is too strong to be weakened by any of those bold or even solemn declarations, which are among the hackneyed tricks employed by the purists in politics, of every country and age, to cheat the people into a belief of their superior sanctity, integrity, and virtue.

If you had been previously the conductor of a newspaper in this city—if your appointment had been any considerable time subsequent to the institution of your paper, there might have been some room for subterfuge; but as matters stand, you have no possible escape.

The fact of the preliminary negotiation which brought you to this city is not material, when so many other facts presupposing it occur; but even this, if the scruples of family connection, or the dread of party resentment, do not prevent the evidence being brought forward, will be proved incontestably; not, indeed, a negotiation in which Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, was the immediate agent, but one carried on by a very powerful, influential, and confidential friend and associate of that gentleman.

That officer has had too considerable a part of his political education amidst the intrigues of a European court, to hazard a direct personal commitment in such a case; he knows how to put a man in a situation calculated to produce all the effects he desires without the gross and awkward formality of telling him: “Sir, I mean to hire you for this purpose.”

It is impossible for a correct mind not to pronounce that, in the abstract, a connection like that which is acknowledged to subsist between you and Mr. Jefferson, between the editor of a newspaper and the head of a department of the government, is indelicate and unfit, and consequently of a nature to justify suspicion.

A connection of that sort in a free country is a pernicious precedent, inconsistent with those pretensions to extraordinary republican purity, of which so suspicious a parade is upon every occasion exhibited.

The apology you attempt for it is ill-founded and inadmissible; there is no law which annexes a particular salary to the clerkship in question—the appointment is under the general authority

given to the head of the department, to appoint clerks with salaries not exceeding aggregatively five hundred dollars to each; there is therefore no restriction to the sum you mention to induce, as matter of necessity, the employment of a person engaged in other occupations, and not ordinarily and regularly attached to the department. Five hundred dollars, or even more, might be legally given, for a clerk, competent to the duty, and if it was not sufficient wholly to employ him, his surplus time might be dedicated to other business of the department—nor could there have been any mighty difficulty in finding a clerk so qualified.

But if there had been such difficulty, some other character should undoubtedly have been found; the precedent of such a species of influence erected over the press ought to have been avoided. This is so obvious, that the not having avoided it is a proof of sinister design.

The employment of Mr. Pintard, by the Secretary of State, was a natural consequence of particular situation. Mr. Pintard, if I am rightly informed, had been employed in the same capacity under the old government, and it was natural enough to continue him in the old occupation and employment; but Mr. Pintard was not the printer of a gazette.

These strictures, though involving Mr. Freneau, it shall be confessed, have been drawn forth principally with a view to a character of greater importance in the community. They aim at exposing a public officer who is too little scrupled to embarrass and disparage the government of which he is a member, and who has been the prompter, open or secret, of unwarrantable aspersions on men who, so long as actions, not merely professions, shall be the true test of patriotism and integrity, need never decline a comparison with him of their titles to the public esteem.

An American.

Source: The Works of Alexander Hamilton, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (Federal Edition) (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904). In 12 vols. Vol. 7

Document 2:

Thomas Jefferson to George Washington

September 9, 1792

...I have never enquired what number of sons, relatives and friends of Senators, Representatives, printers or other useful partisans Colonel Hamilton has provided for among the hundred clerks of his department, the thousand excisemen, at his nod, and spread over the Union; nor could ever have imagined that the man who has the shuffling of millions backwards and forwards from paper into money and money into paper, from Europe to America, and America to Europe, the dealing out of treasury secrets among his friends in what time and measure he pleases, and who never slips an occasion of making friends with his means, that such an one, I say, would have brought forward a charge against me for having appointed the poet, Freneau, translating clerk to my office, with a salary of 250 dollars a year. That fact stands thus. While the government was at New York I was applied to on behalf of Freneau to know if there was any place within my department to which he could be appointed. I answered there were but four clerkships, all of which I found full, and continued without any change. When we removed to Philadelphia, Mr. Pintard, the translating clerk, did not choose to remove with us. His office then became vacant. I was again applied to there for Freneau, and had no hesitation to promise the clerkship for him. I cannot recollect whether it was at the same time, or afterwards, that I was told he had a thought of setting up a newspaper there. But whether then, or afterwards, I considered it a circumstance of some value, as it might enable me to do, what I had long wished to have done, that is, to have the material parts of the Leyden Gazette brought under your eye, and that of the public, in order to possess yourself and them of a juster view of the affairs of Europe than could be obtained from any other public source. This I had ineffectually attempted through the press of Mr. Fenno, while in New York, selecting and translating passages myself at first, then having it done by Mr. Pintard, the translating clerk, but they found their way too slowly into Mr. Fenno's papers. Mr. Bache essayed it for me in Philadelphia, but his being a daily paper, did not circulate sufficiently in the other States. He even tried, at my request, the plan of a weekly paper of recapitulation from his daily paper, in hopes that that might go into the other States, but in this too we failed. Freneau, as translating clerk, and the printer of a periodical paper likely to circulate through the States (uniting in one person the parts of Pintard and Fenno), revived my hopes that the thing could at length be effected. On the establishment of his paper, therefore, I furnished him with the Leyden Gazette, with an expression of my wish that he could always translate and publish the material intelligence they contained, and have continued to furnish them from time to time, as regularly

as I received them. But as to any other direction or indication of my wish how his press should be conducted, what sort of intelligence he should give, what essays encourage, I can protest, in the presence of heaven, that I never did by myself, or any other, or indirectly, say a syllable, nor attempt any kind of influence. I can further protest, in the same awful presence, that I never did by myself, or any other, directly or indirectly, write, dictate or procure any one sentence or sentiment to be inserted in his, or any other gazette, to which my name was not affixed or that of my office. I surely need not except here a thing so foreign to the present subject as a little paragraph about our Algerine captives, which I put once into Fenno's paper. Freneau's proposition to publish a paper, having been about the time that the writings of Publicola, and the discourses on Davila, had a good deal excited the public attention, I took for granted from Freneau's character, which had been marked as that of a good whig, that he would give free place to pieces written against the aristocratical and monarchical principles these papers had inculcated. This having been in my mind, it is likely enough I may have expressed it in conversation with others, though I do not recollect that I did. To Freneau I think I could not, because I had still seen him but once, and that was at a public table, at breakfast, at Mrs. Elsworth's, as I passed through New York the last year. And I can safely declare that my expectations looked only to the chastisement of the aristocratical and monarchical writers, and not to any criticisms on the proceedings of government. Colonel Hamilton can see no motive for any appointment, but that of making a convenient partisan. But you, Sir, who have received from me recommendations of a Rittenhouse, Barlow, Paine, will believe that talents and science are sufficient motives with me in appointments to which they are fitted; and that Freneau, as a man of genius, might find a preference in my eye to be a translating clerk, and make good title to the little aids I could give him as the editor of a gazette, by procuring subscriptions to his paper, as I did some before it appeared, and as I have with pleasure done for the labors of other men of genius. I hold it to be one of the distinguishing excellences of elective over hereditary successions, that the talents which nature has provided in sufficient proportion, should be selected by the society for the government of their affairs, rather than that this should be transmitted through the loins of knaves and fools, passing from the debauches of the table to those of the bed. Colonel Hamilton, alias "Plain Facts," says, that Freneau's salary began before he resided in Philadelphia. I do not know what quibble he may have in reserve on the word "residence." He may mean to include under that idea the removal of his family; for I believe he removed himself, before his family did, to Philadelphia. But no act of mine gave commencement to his salary before he so far took up his abode in Philadelphia, as to be sufficiently in readiness for the duties of the office. As to the merits or demerits of his paper, they certainly concern me not. He and Fenno are rivals for the public favor. The one courts them by flattery, the other by

censure, and I believe it will be admitted that the one has been as servile, as the other severe.....

Source: The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 8. Andrew Lipscomb, ed. 1908.

Document 3:

Thomas Jefferson to Philip Freneau

Philadelphia, February 28, 1791. Sir,—The clerkship for foreign languages in my office is vacant. The salary, indeed, is very low, being but two hundred and fifty dollars a year; but also, it gives so little to do, as not to interfere with any other calling the person may choose, which would not absent him from the seat of government. I was told a few days ago, that it might perhaps be convenient to you to accept it. If so, it is at your service. It requires no other qualification than a moderate knowledge of the French. Should anything better turn up within my department that might suit you, I should be very happy to be able to bestow it so well. Should you conclude to accept the present, you may consider it as engaged to you, only be so good as to drop me a line informing me of your resolution. I am, with great esteem, Sir, your very humble servant.

Source: The Writings of Thomas Jefferson Volumes 7-8. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation. 1907.



Document 4:

Philip Freneau to Thomas Jefferson

Sir

New York March 5th. 1791

.....Having been for sometime past engaged in endeavouring to establish a Weekly Gazette in Monmouth County, East Jersey, and having at present a prospect of succeeding in a tolerable Subscription, I find myself under the necessity of declining the acceptance of your generous unsolicited proposal....

Philip Freneau

Source: The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008.

Original source: Main Series, Volume 19 (24 January–31 March 1791)

Document 5:

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson

May 1, 1791

...I have seen Freneau and given him a line to you.<sup>1</sup> He sets out for Philada. today or tomorrow, though it is not improbable that he may halt in N. Jersey. He is in the habit I find of translating the Leyden Gazette and consequently must be fully equal to the task you had allotted for him. He had supposed that besides this degree of skill, it might be expected that he should be able to translate with equal propriety into French; and under this idea, his delicacy had taken an insuperable objection to the undertaking. Being now set right as to this particular, and being made sensible of the advantages of Philada. over N. Jersey for his private undertaking, his mind is taking another turn, and if the scantiness of his capital should not be a bar, I think he will establish himself in the former. At all events he will give his friends then an opportunity of aiding his decision by their information & counsel. The more I learn of his character talents and principles, the more I should regret his burying himself in the obscurity he had chosen in N. Jersey. It is certain that there is not to be found in the whole catalogue of American Printers, a single name that can approach towards a rivalship....

Source: The Writings of James Madison, comprising his Public Papers and his Private Correspondence, including his numerous letters and documents now for the first time printed, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900). Vol. 6.

Document 6:

Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Randolph

May 15, 1791

...I inclose you Bache's as well as Fenno's papers. You will have perceived that the latter is a paper of pure Toryism, disseminating the doctrines of monarchy, aristocracy, & the exclusion of the influence of the people. We have been trying to get another weekly or half weekly paper set up excluding advertisements, so that it might go through the states, & furnish a whig vehicle of intelligence. We hoped at one time to have persuaded Freneau to set up here, but failed.....

The Works of Thomas Jefferson, Federal Edition (New York and London, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-5). Vol. 6 Paul Leicester Ford, ed.

Document 7: Thomas Jefferson to James Madison

July 21, 1791

...I am sincerely sorry that Freneau has declined coming here. Though the printing business be sufficiently full here, yet I think he would have set out on such advantageous ground as to have been sure of success. His own genius in the first place is so superior to that of his competitors. I should have given him the perusal of all my letters of foreign intelligence and all foreign newspapers; the publication of all proclamations and other public notices within my department and the printing of the laws, which, added to his salary, would have been a considerable aid. Besides this, Fenno's being the only weekly or semi-weekly newspaper and under general condemnation for its toryism and its incessant efforts to overturn the government, Freneau would have found that ground as good as unoccupied....

Source: The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 19. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association. 1903.

Document 8:

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson

July 24, 1791

I have seen 'Frenau, and, as well as Col H. Lee, have pressed the establishment of himself in Philad'a where alone his talents can do the good or reap the profit of which they are capable. Though leaning strongly ag'st the measure, under the influence of little objections which his modesty magnified into important ones, he was less decided on the subject than I had understood. We are to have a further conversation, in which I shall renew my efforts, and do not despair, though I am not sanguine, of success. If he yields to the reasoning of his friends it is probable that he will at least commence his plan in alliance with Child's or to the emoluments. In the conduct and title of the paper it will be altogether his own. I am not much disappointed tho' I much regret the rejection of P—e in the late appointment. Another opportunity of doing him some justice may not occur, and at the present moment it was to be wished for a thousand reasons that he might have received from this country such a token of its affection and respect.

Source: Printed in Washington-Madison Papers: Collected and Preserved by James Madison. Published 1892.

Note: Philip Freneau was appointed to a position as translator for the Secretary of State on August 16th, 1791 for a salary of \$250 per year. He then established a weekly newspaper that became known for pro-republican writings.