Washington February 12th 1820

Sir.

Your very friendly communication of the 9th Inst. is now before me and I lose not a moment in expressing to you the pleasure I have taken in its perusal - The confidence you are pleas'd to express in my ~~dis~~ "readiness to act up fully to the high trust with which the people have cloth'd me" shall not be misplaced - Obsta principiis is still my motto and I yield it not to time or circumstance - The fears which you express in relation to a talk'd of compromise between the North and the South, I flatter myself may be entirely dismiss'd - This has been casually the subject of conversation since the commencement of the session but the Southern representatives have invariably insisted on a decision of the great principle in the Missouri Bill, and have voted down proposition after proposition which look'd to a different course of proceeding - It is also true that some few have encourag'd the idea that an understanding might finally take place - but the great majority have invariably rejected the idea - For myself I have never hesitated to declare the attempted restriction on Missouri a daring assumption of power over the sovereign authority of a State - and on the subject of the territories North and West of Missouri, altho' I have not gone so far as to pronounce the contemplated restriction on them a violation of the Constitution (for my mind has altogether been directed to the ensuing growing out of the Missouri Bill) yet I have not and do not hesitate to declare it arbitrary and unjust - It is our property in common with the inhabitants of the North - and no principle of justice can sanction an act which

territorial question will be presented to him and his act will speak for itself - The opinion he may entertain on that subject is unknown to me - But looking on such a measure as one fraught with injustice and inequality I entertain a strong hope that it might meet with his negative -

It has been stated here that the Pennsylvania Legislature has postponed its nomination of Electors until sometime in March with a view to this very question - I have little doubt that if the restriction of slavery in the Territories shall meet with Mr Monroe's disapproval, that State will advocate the claims of some other individual - and if so it is much to be fear'd that the North will rule our destinies - If on the contrary, he should approve such a measure, then Pennsylvania supports him and his election will be secure - He has a difficult part to play and I doubt very much if it would not be wise in Virginia to adopt the policy of suspending her decision until the plot of the drama shall be fully disclosed -

I have been so much indisposed for the last eight or ten days as to have been prevented from mixing in the concerns of the busy world and am therefore prevented from responding as satisfactorily to your enquiries as might have been wished - In the spirit of candour however I have communicated all the information which I possess - and can only add that it will at all times afford me pleasure to hear from you and that I am with sentiments of high respect

Yr. Obt Servt

John Tyler

William Selden Esqr

P.S. I am told that it is more than probable that Mr J. Barbour

which shall have the effect of excluding from it any member of our society - Our property in our slaves is as full and complete as that in our plantation utensils - and with equal semblance of propriety might it be contended that we should not carry with us into the western forests an axe or an hoe - ~~as we elected~~ This territory too has been acquired through the policy of the South - It is well known that the north opposed the purchase of Louisiana - Upon what principle of justice or right can the north now undertake to shut us out of its enjoyment? For these reasons and others equally forcible, I have not hesitated to avow the sentiments above expressed - And you may without difficulty pronounce whether there was ever great danger of my entering into a compromise - Of the President's views I know nothing - Best this I do know that he has not disguised or concealed his opinion on the subject of the attempt to make a constitution for Missouri - I may be at liberty to say that he has exchanged sentiments with me on that subject and if my memory does not decieve me I think I report him faithfully when I understood him as advising "mildness but firmness and decision" I trust there may be no cause for a diversion of sentiment in Virginia as to his reelection, for altho' many of his Executive acts do not meet my approbation yet a crisis has arrived which demands unanimity on the part of the South - I feel assured that he would not hesitate to put his veto on any Bill which should restrict a territory about to become a state in the exercize of any power appertaining to her sovereign character - On such a question however he will not have to decide for our majority in the Senate will neutralize the majority (if in fact there be a majority) in the H. of Representatives - But I have little doubt but that the

will abandon all idea of compromise - He has regarded our national affairs as having reach'd a crisis - and altho' for myself I think that we cannot postpone to too distant a day a sacrafice of our rights on the alter of conciliation and compromise, yet I am convinc'd that he has been govern'd by a spirit of pure and ardent patriotism -

J. Tyler

Missouri Compromise

1820

Mr J Tyler