Lincoln Lectures Johnson on Reconstructing Tennessee

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September 11, 1863 - President Abraham Lincoln lectures Military Governor Andrew Johnson about reconstructing Tennessee state government

EXECUTIVE MANSION,

Washington,

September 11, 1863.

Hon. ANDREW JOHNSON:

MY DEAR SIR: All Tennessee is now clear of armed insurrectionists. You need not to be reminded that it is the nick of time for reinaugurating a loyal State Government. Not a moment should be lost. You and the co-operating friends there can better judge of the ways and means than can be judged by any here. I only offer a few suggestions. The reinauguration must not be such as to give control of the State and its representation in Congress to the enemies of the Union, driving its friends there into political exile. The whole struggle for Tennessee will have been profitless to both State and Nation if it so ends that Governor Johnson is put down and Governor Harris is put up. It must not be so. You must have it otherwise. Let the reconstruction be the work of such men only as can be trusted for the Union. Exclude all others, and trust that your government so organized will be recognized here as being the one of republican form to be guaranteed to the State, and to be protected against invasion and domestic violence. It is something on the question of time to remember that it cannot be known who is next to occupy the position I now hold, nor what he will do. I see that you have declared in favor of emancipation in Tennessee, for which may God bless you. Get emancipation into you new State government constitution and there will be no such word as fail for your case. The raising of colored troops, I think, will greatly help every way.

Yours, very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

OR, Ser. III, Vol. 3, p. 789.

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