

From Lewis Tappan to Henry Clay New York, May 1, 1838

Without consulting with any individual I have thought it well to address a few lines to you about the presidential election. For ten years past I have abstained from all partyism in politics, and voted for those I deemed the best men irrespective of the party from which they belonged. The abolitionists will, I think, act on this principle generally. In order to obtain their votes the respective parties will be obliged to put up candidates they can conscientiously vote for. Acting independently, and being an increasing association, they will, ere long, decide the elections in the free States, without being a political party. Dr. [Eliphalet] Nott, President of Union College, N.Y. told me a few days since, that in this opinion the abolitionists can now decide the elections in every county in this State of West of Albany, & that the editors of the political papers know it. In Rhode Island the abolitionists recently decided the election. They can decide the next election in this city.

I have no doubt a majority of the abolitionists prefer you to Mr. Van Buren, in many respects, especially since the infamous pledge given by him in his inaugural speech, but they will not, I believe, ever vote for a man, however distinguished in other respects, who is a slaveholder and the President of the Colonization Society, certainly not unless they are assured he will go for immediate emancipation in the District of Columbia, and relinquish all connexion with the Soc. Mentioned. You will not be offended I am sure with this honest freedom of expression.

I respectfully submit these thoughts to you, for your consideration. The abolitionists throughout the country meet by their delegates in this city this week & the beginning of the next. They will discuss the proper action for them to take in the ensuing great election. If you deem it best to express any sentiments on the above subject I shall be happy to receive them under such restrictions as you see fit to impose.

