

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker
May 25, 1863

Copy

Washington
Treasury Department.

May 25 1863

My dear General

I shall try to write this letter in so plain a hand that you will not miss Butterfield in endeavoring to read it.

This morning I called on Secretary Stanton with Chandler & made an express to him my opinion of your late movement & battle giving you the great credit which I honestly think due to you for the courage, ability and prudence you displayed. The subject of increasing your present force was then discussed. In the course of the conversation on this matter the Secretary expressed his perfect readiness & indeed his earnest wish to give you all the support possible, but doubted whether adding the movable column now in front of Washington to ^{your} immediate command would help you so much as the retaining of it in its present position & work. He said most distinctly however, that everything in his power east of the Shenandoah valley was practically ~~not~~ immediately under your orders and that

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker

May 25, 1863

you would be joined by whatever portion of
the force before Washington on ^(on the) Peninsula or
in the vicinity of Norfolk you should think
necessary to your most effective action; con-
sulting of course as you certainly would, the
general safety and success as well as the
safety and success of the movement under
your immediate personal direction.

After having in Stanton I saw the President.
He read to me the letter you read to me yesterday
at camp. I made of course, no allusion to the
fact that I had heard it before. but listened
attentively. Having read it he said "you see
exactly how the matter is left. At the same time
while he seemed to feel the necessity of doing
whatever you might desire to strengthen
you, he expressed some apprehension lest
in trying to do so, other important points
might be too much weakened. He evidently
regarded every thing as left pretty much to
your discretion.

While I was with the President Mr. Butler's
was announced, and the President remarked
that you were sending up the different
commanders of divisions that he might
satisfy himself as to their sentiments

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker

May 25, 1862

in relation to which he had intimated
some apprehension in his letter to you.

The result of both interviews satisfied
me that three courses are open to you,
first inaction where you are until reinforced
from the draft, if ever, secondly to fight with
the troops you have at once; thirdly to call
earnestly & positively for the additional
twenty or thirty thousand men for the
movement you described as possible.

The first is not to be thought of if it can
be possibly avoided; the second should
not be risked except as an alternative
to the first; the third seems to me the true
course. Ask the President for a correct
statement of the troops at Norfolk & Suffolk
at Fort Mifflin and on the Peninsula,
ascertain as nearly as possible what
may be spared without risking seriously
Norfolk or the approaches to the Forts;
make the same enquiries as to the troops
before Washington and their work. Then
collect all you need to hold your present
position and move on the enemy with
your main body according to your best
judgment with the utmost possible celerity

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker
May 25, 1863

in relation to which he had intimated
some apprehensions in his letter to you.

The result of both interviews satisfied
me that three courses are open to you,
first inaction where you are until reinforced
from the draft, if ever; secondly to fight with
the troops you have at once; thirdly to call
earnestly & positively for the additional
twenty or thirty thousand men for the
movement you described as possible.

The first is not to be thought of if it can
~~be~~ possibly be avoided; the second should
not be risked except as an alternative
to the first; the third seems to me the true
course. Ask the President for a correct
statement of the troops at Norfolk & Suffolk
at Fort Monroe and on the Peninsula,
ascertain as nearly as possible what
may be spared without risking seriously
Norfolk or the approaches to the Fortress;
make the same enquiries as to the troops
before Washington and their work. Then
collect all you need to hold your present
position and move on the enemy with
your main body according to your best
judgement with the utmost possible celerity

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker
May 25, 1863

in relation to which he had intimated
some apprehensions in his letter to you.

The result of both interviews satisfied
me that three courses are open to you;
first inaction where you are until reinforced
from the draft, if ever; secondly to fight with
the troops you have at once; thirdly to call
earnestly & positively for the additional
twenty or thirty thousand men for the
movement you described as possible.

The first is not to be thought of if it can
~~be~~ possibly ~~be~~ avoided; the second should
not be risked except as an alternative
to the first; the third seems to me the true
course. Ask the President for a correct
statement of the troops at Norfolk & Suffolk
at Fort Mifflin and on the Peninsula;
ascertain as nearly as possible what
may be spared without risking seriously
Norfolk or the approaches to the Forts;
make the same enquiries as to the troops
before Washington and their work. Then
collect all you need to hold your present
position and move on the enemy with
your main body according to your best
judgement with the utmost possible celerity

Palmer P. Chase
Letter to General
Joseph Hooker

May 25, 1863

and decision. It really seems to me that all that is possible in months may be accomplished by vigorous work in some days, without seriously endangering the vast stores accumulated here or the important positions which must be held elsewhere.

There must indeed be no disaffection. Better for make new generals of the best captains or lieutenants. I fear it is a mistake to have chiefs of Corps come up here to tell their different stories, though it may be for the best. We all like to be heroes and every body knows so well what he himself has done and how much better everything else would have been done if his counsel or his ideas had been followed!

Pardon this letter dear General, let it have not a bit of consideration except as hints to be improved or rejected by your better judgment.

Cordially yours

P. P. Chase

Major General Hooker.

