Dear Sir,

Monticello Jan. 15, 16.

Of the last 5 months, I have been past at Poplar Forest where I am engaged in improvements requiring much of my presence. While there no letter are forwarded to me, the post being very circuitous. They are accumulating here during my absence, and on my return, are pressing for answers. As soon after my last return as my progress in this course afforded me the prospect of a day to spare, I wrote to Mr. Higginbotham (being next door neighbor to Price) to ascertain whether we might count on Price’s attendance, without which nothing could be done. And I did not know in what dispositions the hunt he received on the last occasion might have left him. This was on the 25th. of Dec. on the 30th. fell a snow, and since that, three others, which have rendered the survey and arbitration impracticable, as all must lie on foot, the operation being near the top of one of our highest mountains, and on it’s rockiest and steepest part. I believe I am the only person who ever climbed it on horseback, and that was because I had not strength to walk. Nothing can be done until the snow disappears, as soon as it does I will get a day fixed and go out and collect the arbitrators & surveyors who live in different distant parts of the county. We cannot expect the former to undertake it but in reasonable weather, as their acting is a favor. I had not answered your letter of Dec. 21. which I found here on my return, because I had the daily hope of being able to inform you of its settlement, and thus make one letter do for two, which is an economy not to be neglected by one who is confined to the writing table from 4. to 6. hours of every day answering letters, but the unpromising appearance of the weather and receipt of yours of the 5th. render this earlier information a duty, although but interlocutory. — My bonds which in your hands may either be burnt or returned to me by the mail.

Mr. Jefferson.
I retain a great esteem for Mr. La Motte, and entire confidence in 
the integrity and worth of his character, and will certainly interest myself 
for him with the Secretary of State, with whom the selection emphatically 
rests, but perhaps the place is already full. It is possible also that it 
may be the will of the government to give a preference to native com-
petitors. If neither of these obstacles be in the way, I shall not despair 
of obtaining it for him. In a question between a native & foreigner I 
believe the Senate is immovable. — I concur with you in consi-
dering the retirement of Mr. Ballahin from the Treasury as a great mi-
tfortune. Had he remained, he would have shielded us from the faux 
trai of the War & Navy departments, which constituted a great portion 
of our expenditures. He would have sooner recourse to the resource 
of substantial taxation, have devised more economical & effectual 
means of using the public credit, and at the same without good will to 
some banking establishment, he would have crushed that root of ban 
which it was so entirely in the power of the government to have done.

I see no issue now but in their bankruptcy, in that of a great portion of 
our merchants, and a total loss of the whole mass of circulating paper in 
the hands of the people, except the paper of the government. I think our 
taxes from the general & state governments this year have been half a crown 
in the pound on land, as much excise, as much import, or perhaps 
the last has been equal to both. The former, this is from 7s. to 10s. in the pound 
income. I shall wish it to continue till we pay our debt, as I consider 
a permanent public debt as a cancer inevitably fatal. I am informed by 
one who is from experience, that of the 15. or 18. a day received by an Eng-
lish laborer, he pays 10. or 12. to government, the remainder 5. or 6. barely sufficient 
to keep body & soul together. Government in this case costs certainly more 
than it is worth, and freedom laboring classes would be happier 
as the Indians are, without government. For I imagine there can be no 
companion between the happiness of an Indian & an English, laborer. Ever and 
affectionately yours

Thomas Jefferson