

*Senate of the United States,
Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation of Arid Lands,
Washington, D.C.*

March 11th, 1897.

Private

No Ans.

Hon. Willis VanDevanter,
Cheyenne, Wyoming.

My Dear Judge:

Am sending this to you hastily by special messenger to the Post Office so that it may be in your hands at the earliest possible moment, in order that you can consider and be ready to answer promptly if I telegraph.

By appointment, Clark and Mondell met me at the White House at 9:45 this morning and we made an assault on the President. Of course the rooms were full and among others many senior Senators but almost as soon as I came in the President came to me and I presented my colleagues, whom he remembered as having called on him at Canton. We drew him to one side, I handed him the letter, opened out, showing my pen memorandum that we had asked no Senators or Members of Congress for signatures except in the states surrounding us and that while the names were few yet all of the Republican Senators and Members who had voted the Republican ticket last Fall and who were either in the 54th Congress or will be in the 55th from Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming had joined in this request. I reminded him that I had learned that one or two of the very places desired for you were now vacant and I called his attention to the first clause of the letter where we applied for a position to be with the Attorney-General. The President said yes, he believed he had one or two resignations now in hand; he read the first clause of my letter and his countenance fell. At this juncture I said, "Senator Clark who has practiced law for many years in Wyoming—and whose reputation was sufficient to secure for him a place on the Senate Judiciary Committee as soon as he entered the Senate for the second time in the history of the American Senate, and this too in place for Clark one notch above Senator Thurston—will tell you his judgment of Judge VanDevanter as a lawyer." Clark immediately opened up in a very pretty little speech and with an enthusiasm which we have never seen in him more than four or five times, saying: "I am willing to stake my reputation and

my seat in the Senate upon his absolute ability to fill any place you may call upon him to fill and to do your administration full credit." The President turned to me with a sort of troubled look and said "Senator Warren, the important position in the Attorney-General's office next to Solicitor General is the Attorney for the Interior Department, and more especially so at this juncture. I am entirely sincere when I say it requires the best lawyer and is the most important place at all times of any below the Solicitor-Generalship, and more especially so; and it is the place for a western man because Secretary Bliss now will depend upon this office almost entirely for his guidance and advice." I then said "Mr. President, admitting what you say, Judge VanDevanter has positively assured me that not being able to get the Solicitor-Generalship, the only places he could afford to accept were those of one of the two assistants to the Attorney-General at his headquarters." He then asked me, if it should come that way if I would be willing to second his desire in persuading you. I replied "If Judge VanDevanter is appointed an Assistant-Attorney-General and the exigencies are such that yourself, the Attorney-General and Secretary Bliss should strongly urge Judge VanDevanter's acceptance, I would of course add my persuasive powers, but that I had no authority nor right to accept for you, nor did I believe that it was your present or ultimate intention to accept that kind of a place. I said that I should consider it a very great personal favor in case it was decided he could not appoint you that I might know it if possible before next Tuesday, as your partner was on the Mediterranean and would be at Naples at that date where you desired to cable him whether he should come home early in April as intended, or whether it was convenient for him to spend a couple of months or more abroad. He replied that he would see if he could not take it up and decide it soon, but that the stream of calls whom he was desirous to see and it was necessary to see, made it almost impossible for him to get to his desk, and that was his apology for not having sent us already any nominations except the Cabinet, one pension officer and one postmaster.

Later the three of us went to the Attorney-General's office and learned that he intended leaving in a few minutes for the White House where he had been called. I stated to the messenger whom I knew that we must see the General for a couple of minutes. We got in, drew him to one side from the crowd waiting, introduced my colleagues and appealed to Clark in about the same language I had used at the White House. He replied in nearly the same strain and in a very emphatic way as to your abilities, etc. McKenna replied "I am more and more

convinced (turning to me) since talking with you last night that Judge VanDevanter must be the very man we want to take the Interior Department. I feel that it is by far the most important of the places in this Department and especially so with Mr. Bliss the present Secretary not a lawyer. It is also of things they will consult with him without much delay. If they ever tell Bliss how strongly I have endorsed you and how strongly my colleagues have done, I feel sure that he will ask for your designation to his Department unless he has some personal candidate of his own for the place. Bliss told me the evening of the 2nd that he had left his wife and daughter in tears and almost on their knees begging him not to go into the Cabinet and that he had again that evening refused to take any place. He looked like death, worn out and wild and he allowed the pressure was intolerable on both sides of the question. The next day he yielded and took the Secretary of the Interior which is lower in the scale of progression or promotion it being the seventh in line, while the Navy is the fifth or sixth and the latter hasn't but a fraction of the work of the former. Of course Bliss had made no arrangements to stay here and he had to go back to New York and prepare.

Yours,

Warren