

Washington, Feb. 15. 1848

Dear Williams:

Your letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> was received last night. Being exclusively a constitutional argument, I wish to submit some reflections upon it in the same spirit, <sup>of kindness</sup> that I know actuates you. Let me first state what I understand to be your position. It is, that if it shall become necessary, to repel in-  
vasion, the President may, without violation of the Con-  
stitution, cross the line, and invade the territory of another  
country; and that whether such necessity exists in  
any given case, the President is to be the sole judge.  
Before going further, consider well whether this is, or is  
not your position. If it is, it is a position that nei-  
ther the President himself, nor any friend of his, so  
far as I know, has ever taken. Their only positions are  
first, that the soil was ours when hostilities commenced,  
and second, that whether it was rightfully ours or  
not, Congress had annexed it, and the President, for  
that reason was bound to defend it, both of which  
are as clearly proved to be false in fact, as you can  
prove that your house is not mine. That soil was  
not ours, and Congress did not annex or attempt to

annex it - But to return to your position: Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, ~~and~~ and you allow him to do so, whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such purpose - and you allow him to make war at pleasure - Study to see if you can fix any limit to his power in this respect, after you have given him so much as you propose - If, today, he should choose to say he thinks it necessary to invade Canada, to prevent the British from invading us, how could you stop him? You may say to him, "I see no probability of the British invading us" but he will say to you "be silent; I see it, if you don't!"

The provision of the Constitution giving the war-making power to Congress, was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons - Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object - This, our Convention understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppressions; and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us - But your view destroys the whole matter, and places our President where Kings have always stood - Write soon again - Yours truly, A. Lincoln