"Let Us Have Peace"

The phrase "Let Us Have Peace" is linked forever to Ulysses S. Grant. These are the only words engraved on the outside of his Tomb and it is easy to assume that these are words he must have spoken to attentive crowds of Americans who turned out to cheer their hero. If not that, perhaps he said it to General Robert E. Lee at the surrender table when the two met at Appomattox. It has also been said that these words constitute the last line of Grant's Personal Memoirs. These suppositions are all in error. Getting closer to the truth is the notion that Grant spoke these words at the Republican presidential nominating convention held in Chicago in 1868 when his name was placed in nomination. But this too is not quite correct. Rather, these words constitute the last line of a formal letter Grant wrote accepting the nomination. Here is the body of that letter:

Washington, D.C., May 29, 1868

General Joseph R. Hawley, President National Union Republican Convention:

In formally accepting the nomination of the National Union Republican convention of the 21st of May instant, it seems proper that some statement of views beyond the mere acceptance of the nomination should be expressed.

The proceedings of the convention were marked with wisdom, moderation, and patriotism, and I believe express the feelings of the great mass of those who sustained the country through its recent trials. I endorse their resolutions.

If elected to the office of the President of the United States, it will be my endeavor to administer all the laws in good faith, with economy, and with the view of giving peace, quiet, and protection everywhere. In times like the present it is impossible, or at least eminently improper, to lay down a policy to be adhered to, right or wrong. Through an administration of four years, new political issues, not foreseen, are constantly arising, the views of the public on old ones are constantly changing, and a purely
administrative officer should always be left free to execute the will of the people. I always have respected that will, and always shall. Peace and universal prosperity, its sequence, with economy of administration, will lighten the burden of taxation, while it constantly reduces the national debt. Let us have peace.

This letter is not widely published and is somewhat difficult to locate, but may be found in part in the book *Ulysses S. Grant, Warrior and Statesman* published in 1969 by Ulysses S. Grant III, son of Frederick Dent Grant and General Ulysses S. Grant's grandson.

It is printed in its entirety in *The Political History of the United States of America During the Period of Reconstruction*, by Edward McPherson published in 1871.

Below, find a facsimile of the actual letter.

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Washington, D.C., May 29th, 1868.

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ministration, will lighten the burden
of taxation, while it constantly reduces
the National debt. Let us keep free
with just restraint.
With great respect,
Your obi. mt.

W. H. Grant

Facsimile of General Grant's Most Famous Letter.