

Executive Speech
of
Thomas Chittenden
As it appears in the
RECORDS
OF THE
GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL
OF THE
STATE OF VERMONT.

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A SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY THOMAS CHITTENDEN, ESQ.,

Gentlemen of the Council and Assembly:

The honor conferred on me by the freemen of this State, in appointing me their chief magistrate, demands a return of my warmest thanks: at the same time, I regret my inability to support the character of so important a station. Notwithstanding, as my appointment appears so unanimous, it affords me the highest satisfaction, and is to me a confirmation of their general approbation of my former conduct; therefore, I shall consider it my duty to serve the ensuing year, and by Divine assistance, shall labor to continue an equal, steady firmness, and impartial administration of justice, which has hitherto governed my conduct; relying on the candor and assistance of my council and the Legislature for my support.

Gentlemen:

The Legislature having constitutionally met, I cannot forbear expressing to you my highest satisfaction in the many great and important advantages arising from the due execution and careful administration of the laws, since they took place, and cannot but rejoice when I reflect on the infinite difference between a state of anarchy and that of a well regulated government; the latter of which we daily experience. And I most earnestly recommend to all magistrates, and others in authority under me, together with the freemen over whom I have the honor to preside, to persevere and let their conduct be uniformly just, and upright, and encourage one another to unite in the supporting and maintaining their common rights; which cannot fail to recommend this State to the impartial world. At the same time am unhappy to inform you that, notwithstanding the generous and lenient measures with which the disaffected inhabitants in the lower part of Cumberland County have been indulged,¹ yet they continue in their unjustifiable obstinacy against the authority of this State; I shall however, recommend the suspension of the laws² intended to have been executed on those offenders, at present, in consequence of a letter received from his Excellency John Jay, Esquire, President of Congress, inclosing certain acts passed by that honorable board, relating to a final settlement of all difference subsisting between this and the adjacent States; which I now submit to you for your consideration; a subject of the greatest importance, and demands your most serious attention.³

Your agents to Congress have attended, agreeable to their instructions, from time to time. Their proceedings I shall now lay before you for your perusal and approbation; which, I hope, will prove satisfactory. From every circumstance, I think we have the highest reason to believe that from the efforts of our agents and the interposition of Congress, our unhappy disputes with the neighboring States, will soon terminate in a final and happy issue.

With respect to the present situation of the domestic affairs of the State, it is with pleasure that I inform you that the measures pursued by the Board of War, by the assistance of Divine Providence, have proved effectually sufficient to defend our frontiers, against the ravages of the common enemy, while they have been permitted to execute their horrid vengeance on many of the innocent inhabitants of the different parts of the continent; which, in some measure, proves the approbation of Heaven to our Independence, and justifies the measures pursued to support and defend it. As the time for which the troops now in service, are engaged, expires the middle of November next, you will be careful to make such provisions for future defence, as your wisdom shall direct.

¹ See the proclamation of pardon, *Appendix H*, Vol., I

² The act specially referred to was that of June 1779, "to prevent persons from exercising authority unless lawfully authorised by this State," which, though general in terms, was of course specially aimed against all persons who should attempt to act in the name and by the authority of New York. The penalty for the first offense was a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds; for the second not exceeding forty stripes on the naked body; and for the third, the right ear was to be nailed to a post and cut off, and the forehead was to be branded with the letter C [contumacious?] with a hot iron. – See Slade's *State Papers*, p. 389.

³ For resolutions of Congress of June 1779, see Vol. I, p. 520; and for resolutions of September 1779, and the consequent action of Vermont, see *Appendix B*.

Gentlemen of the Assembly:

I shall, from time to time, during the session, digest and communicate to you, such other matters as shall appear to me to require your attention, in a full confidence that the same zeal to promote the common cause, for which the inhabitants of this State have hitherto been distinguished, will be equally conspicuous in your deliberations.

THOMAS CHITTENDEN.