

Executive Speech
of
Isaac Tichenor
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Speech of Gov. Tichenor – 1799

Gentlemen of the Council & Gentlemen of the House of Representatives.

The confidence of his constituents affords the highest pleasure an upright magistrate can receive; the continuance of that confidence, expressed in their annual suffrages, gives a sanction to his official conduct, and is indeed his best reward; but even this enjoyment is heightened, when he perceives the state, over which he presides, in the possession of peace and prosperity, and the nation advancing in riches and honor. That I eminently enjoy this rich satisfaction, a cursory display of the public concerns of the state, and the Union, will abundantly illustrate.

In our inland state agriculture attaches primary attention. We have to rejoice that our early harvest has been plenteous, and the latter harvest promises speedily to gratify the brightest hopes of the husbandman. While we deplore the pestilence,¹ which has thinned the seaports of our sister states, our mountains and our valleys have been the habitations of health: while war has ravaged other countries, our happy interest in the Federal Union has preserved our land in peace: and while domestic tumult has destroyed the tranquility of others, we have to rejoice that no daring insurrection has disgraced our Government; and that our citizens continue to venerate Religion, Morality, and the Laws.

We may congratulate ourselves, that at no period since the formation of our government, were the duties of the Legislature less arduous. By the wise and prudent arrangement of the last and preceding Legislatures, the debts that were contracted in support of our revolutionary war, and fore extinguishing the claims of a neighboring state, are now happily discharged; and the people of this state, accustomed to industry, temperance, and frugality, are in general prosperous and happy, under a system of laws wisely adapted to our local situation, and adequate to the general exigencies of Government.

As a state, however, we have the ensuing year to meet some expenses which, although reasonable, and by no means burthensome, will call for the exercise of public economy: I allude to the direct tax of the United States, and the sitting of the Council of Censor, which, if the result of their wise deliberations should conclude in calling a Convention, would enhance the demands on the public chest. Perhaps it may not be amiss, on this occasion, to suggest the expediency of the Legislature's giving the efficacy of example to the precept of economy.

The last time I had the honor to address you, our national prospects were clouded, and nothing but a firm reliance, under heaven, in the justice of our cause, and a well grounded confidence in the wisdom of the Chief Magistrate of the Union, and the patriotic energy of our national administration, could have supported the discerning citizen in the assurance of the welfare of his country. But no sooner had the United States assumed a firm and decided attitude, no sooner had our nation equipped and manned her Navy with her native citizens, and enacted salutary laws for the defense and protection of our rights, then foreign aggressors abridged their depredations. Our commerce, under the protection of our Flag, at once revived; and the citizens of the United States, daily experiencing the beneficial effects, manifest their approbations and support: even the combined powers of Europe envy the wisdom and patriotism of our administration, which, without the horrors of open war, has already procured us the respect, and I trust will soon secure us that justice from the French rulers, which they themselves cannot retain, without the sacrifice for abundant blood and treasure.

If, as a member of the Union, we are called upon to defray our proportion of public monies, for the support of measures which have for their objects the security of our excellent governments, the preservation of our property, or our civil and religious rights, and the protection of our commerce, upon which (I cannot too often repeat) the success of our agriculture ultimately depends, what good citizen is there among us that would not yield a ready compliance?

¹ The yellow fever, which had been very fatal.

An unfortunate event, which took place near the north line of this state, within the province of Canada, in February last, and which, in its consequences, might have interrupted that good neighborhood, which it is the mutual interest of people inhabiting adjacent territories to preserve, has led to a correspondence between the Executive of his Britannic Majesty's province of Lower Canada and myself. I shall now only add, that we are indebted to the liberality and justice, which has distinguished the conduct of his Excellency the late Governor Prescott, and the coincidence of the present commander in chief, Governor Milnes, for a happy and amicable adjustment of this disagreeable business. As this correspondence particularly appertains to the executive branch of our Government, I shall lay it before the Council, whose wisdom will direct such further communication as they may think proper.²

I shall communicate to you certain Resolutions from the states of Virginia and Kentucky. These resolutions, in some of our sister states, whose opinions we respect, have met with severe comment; in others with marked contempt: it remains for you to reply to them in the manner you shall judge they merit. For my own part, I have not the smallest hesitation in predicting that they will meet your decided disapprobation: because they contain principles hostile to your best interests, and because I know you love your country, and are rationally attached to the principles of our excellent Federal Constitution.

I wish you an agreeable session, and ardently pray the Governor of the Universe, to direct all your deliberations for the best good of your constituents, and welfare of your Country.

ISAAC TICHENOR.

² See special message on this subject, *post* p. 514.