

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

Volume IV.

1802

October 18, 1802.

Speech of Gov. Tichenor – 1802.

Gentlemen of the Council ,and of the House of Representatives:

There cannot be a more important civil trust, than that which our constituents have assigned us. To designate those officers, on whose decision all that belongs to life, liberty, or property may depend is a weighty and serious transaction. Instead of being a matter of intrigue, party, or selfish policy, it requires all the calmness of wisdom, all the disinterestedness of virtue. Nor could there be a more unfortunate error, than to make those civil appointments, which by our constitution must be annual, a matter of private friendship, interest, party, or faction. You will meet this part of your business, Gentlemen, with all the calmness, impartiality and attention to the public good, which the honor and interest of the state essentially require.

One of the greatest misfortunes, that attends republican Governments, is the progress and violence of party spirit. We need not recur to ancient history for proof. Our beloved Washington, with all his moderation, wisdom and virtues, was not able to repress the destructive spirit; we know that an ardent love for his country, and a life devoted to its service with the most upright intentions, did not shield him and his measures from its malignant effects. It existed in his day, and has progressed with time, and increased with violence, until now. In a government, where the honors and emoluments of public offices are alike open to all the citizens, it will be natural for many to appear as candidates for public approbation and employment; and many good effects will arise from a spirit of emulation, enterprise and ambition: let them be well directed, and under proper regulations and they will give rise to the most necessary and useful public exertions. But when ambitious men become inflamed, so as to produce a violation of the laws of virtue, the destruction of private character, the propagation of falsehood and slander and established rancorous spirit of party, they introduce into civil society some of the worst evils. One part of the community becomes inflamed against the other; different parties are ranked under different leaders; they have different views and aims, and forgetful of the public good, are most of all active and violent to accomplish their own particular purposes. It cannot be, in such a state of things, but that the public interest will be sacrificed to private views; and the more engaged men are in such pursuits, the more the public interest must suffer and the public peace be endangered.

Republican government cannot be maintained but by a union of the wise and good. It requires the abilities and exertions of the wisest and most virtuous, in every country, to direct the public affairs, to restrain the vicious, to give the laws a proper direction and energy, and to keep up those civil and moral institutions on which the existence and safety of civil society essentially depend. Those, therefore, who, from a spirit of party, or personal aggrandizement, labor to divide and inflame one part of the community against the other, whatever motive and principles they may avow, are the greatest enemies to our republican constitution and form of government. A remedy for these evils, so pernicious to society, is not within the reach of legislative acts; it is only on the virtue and correct information of the great body of the people, that we can rely to stop their progress, or to do away their fatal effects; and when aided by the precepts and examples of virtuous representatives and upright magistrates, [these] will, I presume, be effectual.

It is not barely from the Constitution and form of government, adopted by this State, that our safety is derived. Connected with other States by the Federal Constitution, the interest and safety of each is involved in preserving the union of the whole.

By a late act of Congress, it has become our duty to make new arrangements respecting the choice of Representatives; and it is of the most serious importance that in all our acts respecting the general government, we discover the most anxious solicitude to preserve and strengthen the union, and to support the Constitution and government of the United States. If under any pretence, or violence of parties, the Federal Constitution should be destroyed, perverted or essentially altered, we may discover our error and ruin at the same disastrous period.

In the view of humanity, it must be a matter of joy, that peace, in Europe, has put a stop to the effusion of human blood; while we rejoice in the event, we feel most sensibly, that the produce of our agriculture is not a little connected with commerce. In an agricultural State, like that of Vermont, it is the commerce of the

maritime states that gives value to that part of our productions which are not wanted for our own consumption, and unless the latter be protected by the energies of government, the former cannot be pursued to any considerable extent with advantage to the laborer.

In a free state, a Militia, well equipped and disciplined, has ever been considered as the great and sure basis of the independence. Impressed with this truth, our sister states have made the greatest governmental exertions, to cherish and invite their citizens to practice the arts of war in times of peace, that they might know how to defend their Country in the hour of danger. In some States, they have furnished the Militia with fire arms, at the public expense, and in almost all the field artillery. In our state, the Militia are very deficient in military equipments and totally destitute of field artillery. I have frequently made the situation of our Militia the subject of unsuccessful communication, and can only hope, from the patriotism of the present legislature, that the claims of this brave and meritorious part of our fellow citizens will be fully answered, especially as the late peace has probably brought the price of military articles within that rule of economy which ought to regulate public expenditure.

I cannot forbear to mention, with high satisfaction, that our schools and colleges are assuming a very respectable appearance of utility and reputation. It is in the progress and influence of education, knowledge, virtue, and religion, that all orders of men will receive the most substantial benefits that can accrue, either to individuals or to societies.

If necessary, in pursuance of the duties of office, I shall recommend for your consideration any other business by particular message. I sincerely wish you an agreeable session, and firmly hope, that with temperance and wisdom becoming the assembled Fathers of the people, you will conduct for their best interest

ISAAC TICHENOR.