

Executive Speech
of
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SPEECH OF GOV. GALUSHA – 1812¹.

Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives, – The continued confidence of my fellow citizens has once more called me to acknowledge, with gratitude, their repeated favors and my renewed obligation. The contest in which we are involved causes me to feel the deepest sensibility of the necessity of your support and benefit of your united wisdom, and also an entire reliance upon that Supreme Being, who hath hitherto been our support and defence, and who bestows wisdom on all who sincerely ask it.

It is the highest interest of every government, but especially of republics, on just and honorable grounds, to cherish peace and a good understanding with all nations; and I sincerely believe it to have been the unremitting endeavor of our National Government, by every mean in their powers, to maintain the blessings of peace — remove the encroachments on our lawful commerce and the infringements on our national rights and independence, without resorting to the last and most dreadful remedy of repelling aggression by force. But Great Britain, from her superior naval force, has claimed the dominion of the seas, and put at defiance the rights of nations and individuals. Such has been her conduct towards the United States that we had no alternative but to submit to her arbitrary edicts and abandon our real independence, or with manly fortitude contend for our sacred rights at the expence and hazard of a war with that formidable nation, which in the exercise of power is regardless of right. When all honorable negotiation was exhausted without effect, and restrictive measures, for want of union and support among ourselves, had failed to produce the desired object, every hope of accommodation having perished, and the cup of our sufferings full, congress, relying on the justice of their cause, the firm support of the patriotic sons of liberty and the aid of the god of armies, resorted to the last remedy of injured nations — an appeal to arms. The particular causes thereof are fully exhibited in the President's Message to both houses of Congress, of the 1st of June, 1812, and the report of the committee of foreign relations thereon.

Although some doubt the propriety of the measures adopted, yet war being declared by the constituted authorities of our country, it ought no longer to remain a question of policy, but it has become the duty of the state governments, and of every individual, with promptitude to espouse the sacred cause of our injured country, second the measures of our general government, provide for the defence and safety of our citizens, and with zeal pursue such measures as will tend to procure an acknowledgment of our national rights, a release of our impressed seamen, remove the encroachments on the great highway of nations, put a final period to the calamities of war, and establish a permanent and honorable peace. At so important and interesting a crisis as the present, it is expedient that we lay aside all party prejudices and unite in one common cause to maintain our independence, and transmit to posterity those invaluable rights which were sealed to us by the blood of our heroes, and by our example invite every citizen and friend of liberty to divest himself of all selfish and local policy, and with patriotic zeal embrace the cause of our common country, a country abounding with every necessary of life and in the full tide of civil and religious liberty. Is it possible to conceive that any citizens, living under such a mild and equal government, can be so destitute of a principle of patriotism, and so lost to their own true interest, as through a fond passion for a foreign power, the violence of party zeal or the sordid passion of avarice, to betray the just cause of their suffering country, prolong the horrors of war, invoke the vengeance of heaven, and be guilty of the blood of thousands, by devoting their talents and yielding their support to a nation whose pledged faith has been so often violated, and whose tender mercies by experience have been proved to consist in cruelty? Rather let a sense of common danger and a love of country cement our hearts, conciliate our affections and disappoint the sanguine hope of the enemy to profit by our divisions.

It is, Gentlemen, expected that the general government will direct all the important operations of the war, and provide means of defence in the several parts of the Union. But situated as this state is, contiguous to the populous settlements of the enemy and exposed to the whole military force in Lower Canada, I should be deficient in my duty if I did not recommend to you in the most pressing manner, by every mean in your power to put this state in the best possible posture of defence; to have the militia properly equipped, ready to take the field, and provide for their speedy and effectual movement to any place of danger whenever occasion requires.

¹ Printed *Assembly Journal* of 1812, p. 14

The militia law will need a thorough revision, and many additions to render it efficient for the exigencies of war. A committee was appointed at our last session for that purpose, and I trust a report will be seasonably made, that there may be a full investigation of the system. The promptitude with which the detached militia, in most of the towns, have marched to the defense of the frontier, has exceeded by highest expectations. Such a patriotic and military ardor pervades the state, that many thousands of the inhabitants, who were by law exempt from military duty, have enrolled themselves, elected their officers, and tendered their services to support the laws and government of their country, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.

As soon as war became certain, I represented the exposed situation of our northern frontiers and the general destitution of arms for the use of the militia, to the Secretary of War, and received information from him that one thousand stand of arms would be delivered to my order at Springfield, Massachusetts, conformably to a law of the United States of the 23^d day of April 1808, for arming the whole body of militia, which arms are to be distributed to the militia, under such rules and regulations as shall be by law prescribed by the legislature of each state and territory. I have since received similar orders for fifteen hundred stands in addition on the same condition. It is requisite therefore that a law should be passed for the purpose of distributing them.

The whole of said arms have been, by the Commissary of Military Store, transported to Bennington, and, from the necessity of the case, I have directed a portion of them to be deposited with the general officers in the northern part of the state, to be used by the militia in case of emergency; and, from like necessity, some have been delivered to the officers of the detached militia, for the use of those soldiers now in service who were destitute; a particular statement of which will be submitted to you, or such committee as may be appointed on the subject of a distribution. I sincerely regret that I am under the necessity to inform you that the arms already obtained fall far short of the real deficiency, and I do earnestly recommend that some measure be adopted that arms may be provided and brought into the state, to be sold to such of the militia as are able to equip themselves, and to furnish such as are not, when called into the service; and that a sufficient quantity of ammunition, tents and camp equipage be provided and constantly kept in readiness for use. After war was declared, the pressing calls from almost every town near the northern limits of this state, to be protected or furnished with the means of defense, were such as rendered it expedient for me to convene the Executive Council, to deliberate and advise on the best measures to be pursued under existing circumstances, which measures I entertain no doubt but you will approve, and make appropriation for the expence; as also for the transporting the arms, and some other incidental expences, which could not be foreseen and provided for at the last session.

It will, Gentlemen, be necessary that a law be passed directing the mode for electing Representatives to represent this State in the Congress of the United States. I am officially informed that this state will be entitled to six representatives in Congress from and after the third day of March next.

The time for which the Hon. Stephen R. Bradley was elected a Senator from this State in the Senate of the United States will end with the third day of March next. It therefore becomes the duty of the Legislature to elect a Senator to supply said vacancy for six years next following the said third day of March. It will also be necessary for you to direct the manner in which the electors of President and Vice President of the United States shall be appointed for the ensuing presidential election, and fix the place for the meeting of the electors.

The last Wednesday of March next being the day appointed by the Constitution for the choice of a Council of Censors, it will be expedient that a law to regulate the choice of said Council be passed in an early part of the session, that it may be seasonably promulgated for the information of the people.

The state of our finances is among the first objects that claim your attention. The most favorable means ought to be resorted to replenish the Treasury with a medium that will answer all the public purposes of the state, and secure its credit on a basis that cannot easily be shaken.

Although the pressure of business at the present session will scarcely allow you time to deliberate on all the various subjects of legislation, yet the improvement in manufacturing is an object of so great utility and so immediately connected with our true interest and complete independence, that it cannot fail to meet the approbation and fostering care of every wise and prudent legislator.

May the importance of the business now before us, and the solemn consideration that the fate not only of the present generation, but of unborn millions, depends on the events of the present time, excite us to an assiduous and zealous attention to our respective duties, and inspire us with confidence and union among ourselves, and a firm reliance on the Omnipotent Being who sways the scepter of the Universe, and directs the destinies of nations, to crown our joint labors with abundant success.

JONAS GALUSHA.