

Executive Speech
of
Jonas Galusha
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SPEECH OF GOV. GALUSHA— 1819¹.

Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the General Assembly, – It is with pleasure that I meet you on the present occasion, at a time of so general prosperity, when not only our own state and country, but the nations of Europe, share liberally of the blessings of Providence. The last season has been peculiarly propitious, and the earth has yielded her increase in great abundance. It is also a subject of the most pleasing consideration, that our dear bought rights and privileges remain secure, and our laboring citizens yet reap the rewards of their own industry; and that peace and a good understanding continues between us and the nations with whom we have any considerable intercourse. Although some apprehension exists, that the arrangements with Spain, so happily concluded with their minister, will not be ratified on the part of the Spanish government, yet we entertain a hope, that further reflection will enable them to judge more correctly of their own interest, and put an end to the long existing disputes between the two governments, and settle a boundary line, which will prevent all danger of future disturbances.

While we enjoy a rich variety of distinguished favors we ought to reflect on them with gratitude, and render the most unfeigned praise to Him who so liberally bestows on us his richest blessings. Permit me, Gentlemen, to enquire, that while we enjoy all the means of wealth and happiness, so general a complaint of the scarcity of circulating medium, and the consequent distress of individuals, in discharging their private debts, and managing their own concerns, prevails? For a people possessing a rich and extensive territory, abounding with the fruits and productions of almost every clime; with an unshackled commerce throughout the habitable world; possessing genius and enterprise exceeded by no other people on earth, to be in distress for want of a sufficient portion of [circulating] medium, is a subject that calls loudly for investigation and reform. Amongst the various causes, the want of economy, in my opinion, is the most prominent. The unlimited credit given in this country, in almost every branch of business, to say nothing of the banks, proves the ruin of too many valuable citizens, of every class and profession in society. The frequent bankruptcies, suspensions, and commitments to county jails, sufficiently prove the fact. I am sensible that this great and growing evil cannot be wholly remedied by acts of legislation; yet I am persuaded, that every wise and virtuous legislature will study and promote economy, whenever it is consistent with justice, and that benevolence which is due to our fellow creatures.

Suffer me, Gentlemen, to submit for your consideration, the propriety of passing a law freeing the body of debtors from arrest and imprisonment on debts of a small amount, which may be contracted after a given time, in future. I am of opinion, that more property is spent in collecting small debts by law, especially when the body is taken in execution, than the amount of debts saved by such collection. I also believe that it would discourage credit where it ought not to be given, and produce punctuality in those who obtain it; yet the only safe remedy against embarrassment or poverty, is a retrenchment of family expenses, and lessening the consumption of articles of foreign growth and manufacture. Much may be done by encouraging home manufactures by legislative provisions; but the most powerful of all means is that of example. Let but one influential citizen from each town in this state, return from this legislature to his constituents, with a rigid determination to abandon the unnecessary use of foreign articles, and while he enjoys all the real comforts and actual conveniences of life, reject everything that is superfluous; his fellow citizens would soon emulate his example and exhibit an improved state of society. General information is indispensably necessary to the preservation of a free republican government; but this cannot be retained if the great body of the people, through want of economy, indulge their propensities in the use of superfluities, and become poor and unable to educate their children. The patronage of the wealthy will never be extended indiscriminately to the children of the whole community. Even that source will diminish where extravagance prevails.

If I am not mistaken, in those states where the banks are the most numerous, and the means of credit the most easy, the recent cry of scarcity of medium, and its consequent distresses, have been the most heard and felt. This, Gentlemen, deserves some attention, if petitions to increase the number of banks in this state should

¹ From the printed *Assembly Journal* of 1819, corrected.

be preferred. Although I wish equal privileges to be extended to every part of the state, yet I am confident that a multiplicity of incorporated banks in a state will prove injurious to the community if ruinous to each other.

Incompliance with the constitution of this state, a Council of Censors must be chosen, on the last Wednesday of March next; it therefore becomes necessary for the General Assembly, at their present session to pass a law regulating the choice of said Council, and appointing a place for their first meeting.

It will be requisite to elect a number of trustees of the University of Vermont, to fill the vacancies of those whose times [terms] of office will expire on the last day of November next. I would likewise further suggest for your consideration, the propriety of granting some further pecuniary aid to the University, in order to enable its officers to render it eminently useful, and truly honorable to the state; at least until the land granted or sequestered, for that purpose can be leased and produce that revenue to the University, which was expected, and which, I hope, will soon be realized.

The act for ascertaining certain claims of this state against the United States, and for obtaining the same, has been duly attended to, but has not yet been decided on. It was late in the last session of Congress before all the necessary papers could be forwarded, agreeable to [the] information received from our representatives, relative to the evidence that would be wanted to substantiate the claims. The papers now lie with the third auditor in the treasury department, for adjustment. I expect a settlement soon after our representative arrive at Washington, at the next session, if it is not before.

I am informed by L^t Bangs of the U.S. Ordnance department, at Vergennes, that he has been directed by the senior officer of that department to deliver to the executive of this state, six hundred and seventeen stands of arms; being a part of this state's proportion, under the law of the United States approved April 23^d, 1808, making provision for arming the whole body of the militia of the United States. The 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. The General Assembly will, therefore, make such order relative to the disposition of said arms, as they judge most expedient. L^t Bangs will deliver the arms at any place in this state, where they can be transported by water; but is not authorized to remove them to any place by land carriage.

All communications that have been made to me, during the recess of the legislature, will be the subject of a special message, and seasonably communicated.

I cannot, Gentlemen, close this address, without expressing to you, and through you to the freemen of this state, the grateful sense I entertain of the honour bestowed on me in electing me to the office of chief magistrate of this state. The repeated assurance of their confidence has added new obligations to improve my feeble ability in promoting their best interests. Notwithstanding I have labored under many disadvantages, yet I have the approbation of my conscience, that I have endeavored to be faithful, and that I have never suffered by private interest to interfere with my public duties. And, if errors have been committed, I entreat my fellow citizens to cast over my failings the mantle of charity, and consider them errors in judgment and not in design. I have always thought it wrong in a republican government, to make too frequent changes of men in office, lest it check that laudable ambition to acquire that knowledge which is necessary to discharge the duties of the office with honour to themselves, and for the best good of the state. But I consider it an equal, if not a greater error, to continue any persons in the most important office in the state, for such a length of time as to encourage them to conceive that they ought to hold their offices by prescription, and lose that sense of that responsibility to their constituents that every officer in a free government ought at all times to feel; nor until old age imperceptibly steals upon them, and renders them less adequate to perform the duties of their office, than they themselves imagine. From these considerations, and from the great desire I have to spend the residue of my life in domestic retirement, I recommend to the freemen of the state to unite on some other person to perform the duties of chief magistrate, after the expiration of the term for which I have been recently elected. Yet be assured, that my zeal for the public good will never cease but with my reason or my life. I hope thro' the aid of an indulgent Providence and your kind support, to be able to discharge the duties of my office to acceptance during the present year, and, at the close of the same, to have the pleasure of bidding you a friendly farewell.

JONAS GALUSHA