

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

Volume V.

1809

SPEECH OF GOV. GALUSHA – 1809.

Gentlemen of the Council, and gentlemen of the House of Representatives, – Invited by the suffrages of a free and virtuous people, to accept the office of chief magistrate of the State, I cannot, I ought not to be insensible of the importance [of the duties] as well as the difficulties which devolved upon me, in the acceptance of so great a trust, and the high responsibility I am under to discharge those duties with faithfulness and impartiality, and in such manner as shall tend to promote the best interest and general happiness of the citizens of this state; having at all time in view our intimate connection with the general government of the Union.

Educated a plain farmer, and consequently destitute of those literary attainments which by many are esteemed so requisite to the due discharge of official duties, I enter upon a scene of new duties with peculiar diffidence. But relying upon honest intentions, on a habitual zeal for the public good, upon your wisdom in the great business of legislation, and above all, upon that Providence which has hitherto supported and protected me, I have concluded to accept the appointment.

Under these impressions, I shall, gentlemen, endeavor, so far as my abilities will admit, to discharge the duties of my office with integrity and faithfulness, and hope to meet the approbation of a virtuous and discerning people.

It has, gentlemen, fallen to our lot, to be entrusted with the concerns of this State at a period the most critical; at a time when two of the greatest Powers of Europe are agitated with all the dreadful passions incident to a state of war; who, regardless of the rights of neutrals and the laws of nations, have interdicted the commerce of the United States, by embarrassing it with exactions, hitherto unheard of; which, if submitted to by the general government, would be to surrender one of our great national rights, and virtually our national independence.

Notwithstanding the most promising measures have been pursued by the administration of the general government, to remove those embarrassments without resorting to arms, as yet they have proved unavailing; and what appears to me still more alarming, is that at a time when all the talents, the wisdom and energies for the States ought to be united and pledged to support the honor, the interest and the independence of the nation, we find that a spirit of discord and disunion, hostile to our happiness, safety and national union, has been cherished by numbers of the misguided citizens of the United States; which has had a great tendency to weaken the hands of government, and prevent the effects of those wise measures, adopted by the general government to maintain our national, and particularly our commercial rights; and what has probably prevented our obtaining redress for injuries already suffered, and emboldened the belligerent powers to continue their wanton aggressions, and to insult us with delusive terms of adjustment.

With these views, I cannot too strongly recommend to you to adopt such measures as will have the most direct tendency to conciliate the affections of the people, and to unite them in their great national interests: and I can with pleasure announce to you, that so far as my information extends, the spirit of opposition to the measures of the administration of the United States, is greatly ameliorated; and a concern for our own national honor, interest and independence, is becoming rapidly prevalent, while the apprehension of a separation of the Union, and the visionary scheme of relying upon a foreign power for the protection of our commerce, is daily vanishing; and I trust will be remembered but with gratitude to Heaven that we have escaped the snares of foreign emissaries and domestic traitors to distract and divide us; and I hope the period is not far distant, when the citizens of the union will lay aside all party feelings and become united like a band of brothers, in support of the best government on earth. But while I recommend to you in the strongest terms, cheerfully to submit to, and as a member of the union, to carry into effect such measures as have been or may be adopted by the United States, for the preservation or defense of our national rights; at the same time permit me to remind you, that you are the guardians of those rights & powers, that are not delegated by the constitution of the United States, but are reserved to their respective states or to the people; for on the careful attention to, and preservation of those rights & powers, depends the political safety of the individual States.

Gentlemen, I shall not now attempt a labored detail of the important business which will probably demand your attention, the present session; but shall merely notice a few subjects, and make further communications as occasion may require.

The state bank is a subject which will deserve your attention. The failure of private banks in the vicinity of this state; the rejecting our bills by the law of one state; and the policy or caprice of others, has embarrassed our mercantile intercourse with the adjoining states. The measures to be pursued to meet or remove the impediments to a friendly trading intercourse with our sister states, which certainly is to be greatly desired, I leave to your consideration. The subject is too important for me to hazard a sudden and undigested opinion upon. It will be remembered by many that I was not among those that favored the instituting of country banks; but it is apparent that the establishment of a public bank in this state, has saved many of our citizens from great losses and probably some from total ruin: for it is obvious that but for this establishment, in lieu of our own Vermont bank bills, our citizens would, on the late bankruptcies, have been possessed of large sums of the depreciated paper of the failing private banks. If the president and directors of the state bank have the year past encountered some difficulties, occasioned by the intrigues of unprincipled speculators, and the alarm occasioned by the failure of so many private banks, I think no apprehensions can be justly entertained that any holders of our bills will eventually suffer from an institution which is, and, I trust, will be supported by the honor, and guaranteed by the wealth of the state. For my own part, I consider the holders of our bills perfectly secure; and as every person in the state has interest in the avails of the bank, they will the more cheerfully acquiesce in any prudent measure you may devise, to give it support.

The state prison, I understand, is now nearly completed, and has for some time been in such readiness as to receive prisoners. All the convicts, that have been sentenced to hard labor, and have not escaped from the county goals, or their terms of confinement expired, have been sent to the state prison, under warrants from the judges of the supreme court, as soon as information was received that the prison was prepared to receive them; and together with those who have been convicted since, have commenced their labors.

It may be proper, at this session, to inquire into the expenditures of the money already appropriated to the erection of that building, and to find if any other appropriation is necessary to complete it, and what further legislative aid is necessary to give to this humane and beneficial institution, its desired effect.

As it is the great object of legislation to promote the highest happiness of the people, I presume you will never lose sight of the two most important interests of this state, the agricultural and manufacturing. Whether any thing can be done for the encouragement of the latter, during the continuation of the embarrassments on commerce, will be a subject worthy of your consideration.

As a well armed and disciplined militia is the great and natural safeguard of a republican government, you will do well to inquire what further regulations and provisions are necessary in that department, to render it serviceable in times of danger.

Sundry official papers have been delivered to me by my respected predecessor in office, which I have not had time to peruse, but which I shall make the subject of a future message.

Gentlemen, I shall cheerfully co-operate with you in every measure that you in your wisdom may adopt, for the well being and happiness of the citizens of this state, and for the true interests of our common country. Relying on that Almighty Being who never errs, and from whom we have received so many and so signal favors, for direction and support, I commend you to the duties assigned you, and may your virtuous and patriotic labors be crowned with abundant success.

JONAS GALUSHA.