

Executive Speech
of
Jonas Galusha
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SPEECH OF GOV. GALUSHA – 1810¹.

Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives, – It has been the pleasure of my fellow citizens once more, by their free suffrages, to proffer me the important trust of chief magistrate of this State. I cannot but feel the highest sense of gratitude for this repeated manifestation of their respect & confidence; but while I view the important duties attached to the office and the high responsibility upon me to discharge those official duties to the honor and best interests of the State, and having at the same time a just sense of my inadequate talents, and the few advantages I have possessed to qualify me for public employment, and especially to act in the capacity of chief magistrate of this Commonwealth, it is with the greatest diffidence I appear before you, and take upon me the solemn obligation duly to discharge the duties assigned me; but relying on the candor and forbearance of a virtuous people, on your wisdom to direct in all the important concerns of the state, and hoping for the guidance and blessing of that indulgent Providence, which has so often been displayed in the defense and prosperity of this rising state, I have accepted my appointment, and shall endeavor as far as my abilities will admit, to discharge the duties devolving on me, with impartiality and upright intentions.

We had, gentlemen, a right to expect that principles of Justice and national honor would, long before this time, have caused Great Britain and France to have revoked their unjust and oppressive decrees, restore freedom to commerce, and left the United States in the full enjoyment of all those rights and privileges, to which by the laws and customs of nations, we, as neutral, are entitled – that our impressed seamen might have been permitted to embrace the bosom of their native country, and the ships and property of our merchants detained in foreign ports, restored to the possession of the rightful owners. But unhappily for the world, the two great rival powers of Europe are still bent on the destruction of each other; and neither being able to encounter his opponent in his own element, with hopes of success, they have adopted a mode of warfare which essentially affects all neutral rights, and every commercial state has felt the bitter effects of their unrighteous policy.

All the nations of Europe, by intrigue, subsidies, and flatteries on one hand, and terrors and the sword on the other, have been drawn or driven, to coalesce with the one or the other of the contending parties, and enter the vortex of the unhappy war. And what has been their fate? Not only the destruction of property, the loss of territory, their former independence, and the sacrifice of innumerable lives, but in the event, they have added immense strength to those two terrific powers who menace all nations, and threaten destruction to the liberties of mankind. Great Britain in the course of the war has augmented her marine force by the addition of a great portion of all the ships of war in Europe, and claims the dominion of the seas. France has been no less active. By her policy, and the unrivalled prowess of her arms, she has combined almost all the whole strength of continental Europe under her banner. In this state of affairs, was it not for the superintending and disposing power of Divine Providence, perpetual wars must be the lot of Europe. With what gratitude, gentlemen, ought we to contemplate the situation of our blessed country! And with what exertions should we endeavor to support every measure of the general government, calculated to preserve it from the disasters that shake the powers of Europe, and drench their fields with blood.

France and Great Britain have, each in their turns, exerted the utmost stretch of their policy to induce the United States to depart from their neutral position, and involve them in their destructive wars. But such has been the wisdom of the measures adopted and pursued by our general government, although we have to regret, that, for the want or unanimity among ourselves, they, in some measure, have failed of their desired effect; yet they have hitherto preserved the inestimable blessings of peace, and prevented ensnaring alliances with either of the belligerents.

Situated as the United States are, at such a local distance from the powers at war, I see nothing dark or portentous in our affairs but division among ourselves. Union is the vital strength of every nation, but especially of all Republics.

¹ From the corrected printed copy.

Permit me, gentlemen, to recommend to you to pursue such salutary measures, and exercise that prudence, which, in your judgment, will have the greatest tendency to assimilate the feelings and unite the citizens of this state, promote friendship with our sister states, and a firm attachment to the government of the union. Was every American heart barred against foreign influence and suitably attached to the government and interest of his own country, we might put the powers of Europe at defiance. We have the means of wealth and improvement within our own territory; and were we to turn our attention to our internal resources, and foster our infant manufactures, the belligerent nations of Europe would soon seek our friendship, court our trade, and render just retribution for the injuries they have done us. But notwithstanding all the privations by foreign powers, and the unhappy divisions among ourselves, we have let these pleasing reflections: our civil and religious liberties bestowed on us by the God of nature, and guaranteed by the republican institutions of our country, remain unimpaired. The hand of industry is not slackened, and the poor have not wanted for that employment which has yielded them a comfortable support. The farmers and mechanics are, by their improved economy, now discharging those debts they contracted when commerce was in the most flourishing state, and we are daily becoming more truly independent. The manufactures, in various parts of the country, are increasing with a rapidity unparalleled; and the pride of Americans begins to be gratified with a dress of our own manufacturing. And I trust the time is not far distant, when the citizens of these United States, instead of relying on foreign countries for their clothing, will be able not only to supply their own wants, but to export every kind of cotton if not woolen goods, and restore to the union that portion of specie, which has been drawn from us by the exclusive use of foreign manufactured goods.

If any further legislative aid should be deemed necessary for the encouragement of domestic manufactures, I doubt not but that they will receive from you all that support which the circumstances of the state will admit.

We have recent intelligence that the Emperor of France has revoked his Berlin and Milan decrees; and although this is not officially announced, yet we have little reason to doubt but that is correct. If so, we may indulge the pleasing hope that the British orders, and all paper blockades, will likewise be revoked, and the commerce of the United States become free and unshackled – our flag unfurled in every sea, and our merchants importing wealth from every clime; and should this happy event ensue, may we not learn wisdom from past experience? No people can profit by commerce, when the balance of trade is against them. And have we not been too profuse in the use of foreign articles of merchandize, which has caused the specie, that was flowing to America, to depart our shores for England and the Indies, and left us with a paper medium, limited in its circulation, and extremely embarrassing to internal commerce? But this is not the extent of the evil. Were our farmers and mechanics to examine past settlements with their merchants, would they not, in too many instances, find, notwithstanding the high price of labor and produce, that their accounts were closed by notes on interest, which are gnawing like a worm at the root of their capital, or lying as a mortgage on their future labors.

The Militia, gentlemen, claim an honorable rank among the objects of your attention. They are the guardians of our rights, the repository of our liberties, and the bulwark of our independence. Mercenary troops may be led to destroy the fair temple of liberty, to trample on the rights of freemen, and trifle with the rights of their countrymen; but the militia, having a common interest with their fellow citizens, their property, their wives, their children, and their all, equally depending on the laws and the fate of their common country, can never be made to surrender the blessings of freedom and the rights of independence to any foreign or domestic usurper.

The improvement of the militia, in that part of the state where I am most conversant, in equipments and military discipline, has exceeded my highest expectations and I doubt not but similar exertions have been made in every part of the state.

The provision made at the last session of the General Assembly, for procuring Field-Pieces for the several companies of Artillery, although every proper exertion has been made, has failed of its desired object; for the reasons of which, I must refer you to the communications of the Commissary of Military stores.

The subject of the University of Vermont was before the General Assembly at their last session, and remains with the unfinished business of the House. It will undoubtedly receive, at the present session, all that attention which the utility and importance of the institution merit. Of such moment is education, that it claims not only

the patronage of all legislatures, but of every friend to the happiness of mankind. It is the suppressor of vice, and the handmaid of virtue. In a republic like ours, it is one of the grand pillars which support the structure of independence. Trace the annals of the world, and you will find, wherever ignorance has prevailed, the people have been soon crushed by the power of despotism, and have become the sport of tyrants.

Your attention, gentlemen, ought not to be wholly confined to the higher institutions of literature; neither should the means of knowledge be restricted to one class of the people, but liberally imparted to all. Every citizen ought to be so far instructed in the sciences as to be able to participate in the blessings of society, comprehend the nature of government, and the benediction of liberty. A people thus enlightened, and possessing a knowledge of their rights, will not be defrauded of them by any specious imposter, or surrender them but with their lives.

All the official communications made to me, during the recess of the Legislature, for your consideration, will be seasonably laid before you.

I shall, gentlemen, at all times cordially unite my endeavors with yours, to promote the best interests of the state, hoping, that under Divine Protection, we may enjoy a prosperous session.

JONAS GALUSHA.