

Executive Speech  
of  
Samuel C. Crafts  
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## SPEECH OF GOV. CRAFTS— 1828<sup>1</sup>.

*Gentlemen of the Council and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:* – In obedience to the will of the freemen, as manifested by their suffrages, I enter upon the duties prescribed by the constitution and laws of this state. This distinguished mark of the confidence of my fellow-citizens, as well as the very favorable light in which they have been pleased to view my endeavors to discharge the several trusts, with which I have heretofore been honored, excites my sincerest gratitude – and demands from me a pledge, that whatever talents I possess will be faithfully exerted, to promote the interest, the honor, and the prosperity of the state.

Our happy relations with the General Government, by relieving us from all concern in legislating on subjects connected with our intercourse with foreign nations – with commerce, and other subjects affecting the general interests of our country, renders your duty, as legislators, comparatively simple and easy. To provide for the prevention of crimes – for the protection of our persons and property – to promote the moral and social virtues – and to appoint the necessary officers to administer and execute the laws, are the principal subjects which will require your consideration. Happily our civil and criminal codes, devised by the wisdom and perfected by the experience of preceding legislatures, are so well adapted to the protection of our persons, our rights, and our property, that it is even doubtful whether the public interest requires any alteration, either in their principles, or in their application.

The circumstances, under which I meet you at this time, will be my apology for omitting to lay before you any particular statement of the condition of our public institutions; or to notice any communications from the General Government, or from the Executives of our sister states, which may have been received by my honored predecessor. These, with any other information, necessary for your consideration, when received, will be made the subject of special communication.

As our social and political institutions can be sustained and perpetuated, only by the general virtue and intelligence of the community – it is our indispensable duty, as members of one great political family, and guardians of the generation which will soon fill out places on the active theatre of life, to make such provision for instruction, as will qualify our youth to discharge the important trust which will be committed to their care. Our youth can be considered in no other light than as children of the state, having a common interest in the preservation of, and in the benefits to be derived from, our free institutions – and possessing also, whether rich or poor, equal claims upon our patriotism, our liberality and our justice. It is, therefore, our paramount duty to place the means for obtaining instruction and information, equally within reach of all. The act to provide for the support of common schools, passed at the last session of the General Assembly, although, in some respects, an improvement upon the laws previously in force, seems to fall short of carrying into full effect the benevolent intentions of the General Assembly – and equal benefit to all, from the apportionment of the money raised for the support of schools. This arises, principally, from the unequal sizes of the different school districts, and from the discretion given to the districts to raise money. The great inequality in the number of scholars, in different districts, produces a like inequality in the amount of schooling. Whilst some districts contain from eighty to one hundred scholars, other, not unfrequently, contain only from twenty to thirty; and as the public money is distributed according to the number of scholars, the opportunities for obtaining instruction will be alike disproportioned. The power given to districts to raise money is frequently, from parsimony, want of ability, or from other causes operating upon a majority of the district, but sparingly exercised. It is believed that these evils may be avoided, and the opportunities for receiving instruction rendered nearly equal to all, by requiring the towns to arrange their several school districts, so as to contain, as near as possible, a similar number of scholars; and directing the selectmen, instead of three cents on the dollar, to assess such an amount on the list, as will, including any school fund such town may possess, amount to a definite sum on each scholar; which sum ought to be sufficient to provide the necessary schooling, in each district, for the year. With these alterations, it is believed, the provisions of the act of the last session of the General Assembly would be productive of the most beneficial effects.

For several years past, petitions for the incorporation of banks have been presented to the General Assembly; and it is probably that similar petitions will be presented at the present session. It is conceded that, in

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<sup>1</sup> From the printed *Assembly Journal* of 1828.

commercial towns, banks are necessary, if not indispensable: and that the various operations of commercial transactions, requiring the frequent use and interchange the large sums of money, could hardly be effected, without the aid and facilities afforded by these institutions. Yet, in an inland country, almost exclusively agricultural, the necessity for banks is considered as much more questionable. It will not be contended that a certain number may not be sustained, within this state, without any material injury to the interests of the people; or that, in some respects, they may not prove beneficial – particularly, in supplying a uniform and known circulating medium. But this number has its limits, beyond which any increase will prove injurious. And whether the number, already established, falls short of, or exceeds those limits, time alone must determine. The motives, which influence monied men to apply for these incorporations, partake less of patriotism and a desire to benefit the community, than to procure a profitable investment of their money. And so long as such investment shall yield a fair profit, so long the property of the bank will be owned by men of capital, who will conduct their concerns in a manner which will preserve the reputation of the institution. But as every additional bank, by dividing the business, must, necessarily, lessen the profits, and, of course, the inducement to hold bank stock; it is to be feared that the stock, when it shall no longer be productive, will pass into the hands of unprincipled speculators, who regardless of the interest of the community, will be tempted, as has frequently been done, to adopt such measures as will bring distress and ruin in their train.

These observations are not made with a knowledge of any improper transactions for the banks now in operation within this state: but, on the contrary, it is believed, that the stockholders have conducted the concerns of their several banks, as much to render them acceptable to the public, as to promote their own private emolument. As there are no known data, whereby to determine the number of banks which may be sustained, within this state, without compromising the welfare and interest of the community, it becomes your duty, as guardians of the rights and interests of the people, to act with great caution on a subject, from which, under present circumstance, but little of benefit can be expected, but which may be productive of the most disastrous consequences.

Among the subjects which annually require the attention of the General Assembly, are applications for land taxes, for the purpose of making roads in the several towns. This mode of taxation had its origin in the early times of our government; and whilst the townships were but partially settled, and, generally, not divided into severalty, the taxation of lands, by the quantity, without reference to their value, for the purpose of rendering them more accessible to settlers, might be, not only a fair, but perhaps the only mode by which taxes on lands, so situated, could be collected. But, at the present time, the situation of the state is materially changed. There are few towns in which the comparative value of lands is not apparent and well ascertained. And whilst some lands, by their proximity to settlements, and to public roads, or from the improvements made upon them, are become very valuable, other lands, lying on mountains, destitute of roads, and often unfit for cultivation, are of little value, it has become desirable that a more equal and just mode of taxation should be adopted. I would therefore recommend for your consideration the inquiry, whether the present mode of taxing, by the quantity, ought not to be discontinued; and that all uncultivated lands, situated in organized towns, be made subject, in conjunction with other taxable property, to all taxes for highways, according to their just valuation.

I congratulate my fellow citizens upon the prosperous condition of our common country. In profound peace with all nations – the great interests of our country fostered and protected – our population and resources increasing at a ratio unprecedented in the history of man – a revenue, collected in a manner the least burdensome to the people, so abundant as to defray the ordinary expenses of our national government, to contribute largely to the permanent defenses and internal improvements of our country, and rapidly to reduce our public debt – and a government which bears so lightly on the people as to be felt only in the consciousness of the security it gives. This unexampled prosperity, in connection with the civil and religious liberty enjoyed under our free institutions, places within the reach of the citizens of the United States greater means for happiness than ever fell to the lot of any other people. Yet in a section of this so highly favored country, there are at this time restless and aspiring characters, some of whom have stood high in the estimation, and have partaken largely of the confidence of their fellow-citizens, who, from disappointed ambition, sectional prejudices, or from other motives as little patriotic, and as regardless of the peace and prosperity of their country as of their own political reputation, have publicly advanced doctrines, and recommended measures, hostile to

the fundamental principles of our government, and, in their tendency, subversive of the integrity of the Union. That these doctrines, instead of receiving the prompt and decided disapprobation of the public, have, on the contrary, acquired numerous proselytes, must, to the patriot, be matter for astonishment and regret. It is however to be hoped that the sober and reflecting portion of the population of that section, having nothing to gain, but much to lose, by a dissolution of the Union, will be found so great as to render these treasonable and seditious proceedings abortive.<sup>2</sup>

There is another subject which I approach with reluctance, but which the solemn duty I owe to my country induces me to notice. It is the bitterness and acrimony, with which the contest for the highest offices in our government is conducted, - and the misrepresentations, slanders, and abuse, which are so unsparingly bestowed on the first characters of our country. That the privilege of electing our rulers - and only for limited periods - a privilege in which the excellence of a republican form of government principally consists, - should be the cause of such an unprecedented agitation of the public mind, must, to the real friends of our institutions, be a source of the deepest regret. It is not my intention, in this place, to enter into any comparison of the respective qualifications of the distinguished men who at this time divide the public opinion, but to lay before my fellow-citizens some of the dangerous consequences, which may ensue to our institutions, from the manner in which this election is conducted. If the highest officers in our government - men of great experience, acknowledged talents, and of the strictest integrity, who measures, after being subjected to the severest scrutiny, and found to be wise, prudent and promotive of the honor and best interests of our country, are to be vilified - their characters traduced - their motives questioned, and their acts misrepresented; the time cannot be distant when the wise, the prudent, and the friends to peace and order will retire from the contest; and our offices will be filled with the ambitious, the unprincipled, and the designing. Our form of government is yet but an experiment. For the purposes of defense against foreign aggression, it has been tried, and found to be competent. But whether it is also competent to withstand the corrupting and insidious inroads of prosperity, remains to be determined. There is virtue and intelligence in our country sufficient, if put in activity, to correct these alarming evils. And it is believed, that whenever the people shall be convinced that their liberties are in danger, they will awake from their apathy, and vindicate the cause of morality of good order, and the honor of their country.

Gentlemen, in all your measures tending to promote the interest, and to increase the happiness of our fellow-citizens, you will have my most cordial co-operation.

SAMUEL C. CRAFTS.

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<sup>2</sup> The reference here is to the nullification doctrines of South Carolina, and especially to John C. Calhoun, who, as member of congress and Secretary of War, was cotemporary with the term of Gov. Crafts in Congress.