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THURSDAY DECEMBER 31, 1807.

No. 43

General Assembly.

DEBATE

Addressing the President U. States.

Friday, December 11.

[CONTINUED.]

Mr. BAKER was not prepared to go into a lengthy discussion on this subject. But he was decidedly against the postponement moved by the gentleman from Newbern. Such a procedure would manifest a greater respect to the President, than a rejection of the proposition before the house. He was, therefore, clearly in favour of taking a vote upon the resolution, and either agree to or reject it. He observed that it was no new thing for the Legislature to address the President of the U. States. This Legislature had heretofore addressed him on the general affairs of the nation; and it was equally proper at this time to do so, and, if we think it will be a public benefit, to request him to suffer his name to be again held up for the Presidency. He was of this opinion, and therefore in favour of this part of the address. This Legislature represents the sovereignty of the State. We send Senators to the General Government, and instruct them how to act. An address from this body is therefore proper, and will have its weight. We are a part of the people; they have never objected to this course being taken. And he thought it much more in order for the Legislature of a State to express their opinion on this subject, than for Members of Congress to meet together and nominate a President. Mr. B. did not think there was any just ground for the fears expressed by the gentleman from Craven as to a measure of this kind producing party-spirit. If the address was examined, it would be found to have no allusion to any party, except to that of which Aaron Burr was the head, and therefore could not be objectionable on that ground.

Mr. J. J. DANIEL said his political palate was not so fastidious as to recoil at the style and language of this address. He wished it to be taken up and decided upon. He was not surprised that the gentleman from Craven wished it to lie on the table. Every one knew this was his wish before he had risen on the subject. The party alluded to, in this address, Mr. D. said, was not the Federal Party, but the party which had attempted to dismember the Union. He thought this sufficiently clear, and it appeared strange that federal gentlemen should suppose the passage alluded to them. The gentleman from Newbern says the language of this address is better suited to the meridian of Turkey than the United States. For his part, he saw no objection to it; but the gentleman's mind he feared, was too much warped by party prejudice, to pass a correct judgment upon it. He was willing, however, to submit it to the good sense and candour of the house. With respect to the propriety of the Legislature's adopting an address of this kind, though the constitution of the U. States and of this State be silent as to their right to act on the subject, there are many cases in which they act, where the constitution is perfectly silent. If the memory of gentlemen be not treacherous, they will recollect, that in the years 1798 and 1804, the President of the U. States was addressed by this Assembly. It is not therefore a novel practice. And it was idle for gentlemen to talk of a simple measure of this kind being big with evils, that it might produce riots & tumults amongst the people. It was calculated to produce no mischief whatever: similar measures heretofore had proved perfectly harmless, and he had no doubt this, if adopted, would be equally so. For his part, he approved of the conduct of the President from *alpha to omega*, and he, for one, would vote for the Address on the table.

A precedent of this kind, Mr. D. said, was introduced in this country before the people were divided into parties, during the Presidency of

Gen. Washington. At the end of four years it was his wish to have retired from holding the reins of Government. But in compliance with the Addresses which flowed in from every quarter, he was induced to retain his situation for another four years. In confirmation of this, Mr. D. read an extract from the 5th volume of Marshall's Life of Washington. Mr. Jefferson has now expressed a wish to retire from office, not only, perhaps, from his desire to go into retirement, but because he is an advocate for a rotation in office. But in the present great crisis of our Affairs, it may be that Mr. Jefferson, on being pretty generally solicited to do so by his fellow-citizens, will again suffer his name to be held up at the ensuing election, especially when he considers that by doing so, he will prevent those confusions of party-spirit which may be expected from a violently contested election. He hoped therefore the resolution would be agreed to.

Mr. PORTER was sorry to see so much warmth on this occasion. He hoped the good sense of the house would prevail in adopting an Address which shall be honourable to the house and satisfactory to the President. If the present motion for the propositions to lie on the table were agreed to, it would doubtless be gratifying to the feelings of the President. It was immaterial to him whether the Addresses on the table were the production of Republicans or Federalists. He owned himself in favour of the amendment proposed by the gentleman from Craven. He would rather the subject of an Address had not been brought forward at all, but since it had been moved, he hoped it would be agreed to in some form. If the present motion was lost, and he hoped it would, another might be made to have the subject re-committed to a select committee who might report an Address which would receive almost an unanimous vote. And this was what he wished. He did not like to see a revival of party-spirit at a time when, perhaps, we are on the eve of a war, and when the united energies of the country will be wanted. It will not be this or that party that will be wanted to meet the enemy that may attack us—but the whole people of the U. States. He called himself a Federal Republican: but if he could not carry what he thought best, he was willing to go with the majority.

Mr. GASTON rose to observe, that he had listened with particular pleasure to the liberal and candid remarks of the gentleman from Rutherford. If every member of the house was as free from bigotry as that gentleman, there would be no difficulty in adopting a proper course on this occasion. Mr. G. had no objection to hold out the hand of fraternal charity. He was disposed to conciliate; and he thought the mode he had proposed the best for this purpose. But the gentleman seems to think there is something disrespectful towards the President in this mode of procedure. It was true, and he did not wish to conceal it, that he was no great admirer of Mr. Jefferson; but if he thought the mode he proposed disrespectful to the love he bore his country, dear to him from birth and from every tie of interest, and the respect he bore to Mr. Jefferson, as President of the U. States, though he differed from him in opinion, would have prevented him from adopting it, as he wished to shew him every mark of respect consistent with his duty.

Let us examine, said Mr. G. if there be any thing disrespectful in the course proposed. When a resolution of this kind is submitted to the house, there are only two modes to get rid of it. If the house thinks it would be improper to act upon it, the most respectful way of disposing of it, is to postpone the consideration of the subject indefinitely. If this course be not taken, and the resolution being found improper, is rejected, this will be an infinitely more disrespectful issue of the business.

He had imitated, in the motion he had made, the course pursued by the Senate of Virginia, and no one could suppose that that body

did not entertain as strong an attachment to Mr. Jefferson as any member in this house. He believed they were disposed, like the gentleman from Halifax, to approve his conduct from *alpha to omega*; and yet they did the same thing when an Address to Mr. Jefferson was before them which he now proposed—because they considered the measure inexpedient. He trusted the course he proposed would be justified by this example.

Mr. DANIEL remarked, that the question before the Senate of Virginia, to which the gentleman from Newbern had alluded, was very different from the present. A part of the Address before that body went to cast reflections upon the conduct of the then minority of Congress, & particularly on Mr. Randolph, one of their members; and, in order to defeat a measure which had been passed by a large majority by the other branch of the Legislature, a motion that it lie on the table, was carried by a majority of a single vote only. In the present case; he saw no impropriety in saying to the President, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou shalt receive the reward due to thy merit."

Mr. E. HARRIS did not anticipate the notion which had been made by his friend from Newbern. He hoped it would not be agreed to. If this Legislature approve the conduct of the Executive of the General Government, they have the same right to say so that any number of individuals have. Approbation coming from the Legislature of a State, indeed, is more dignified, and contains more weight, than an Address from any other body of men. Such Addresses do no harm, but much good. They shew to nations intending to annoy us, that we are united in the support of our Government. They have efficiency also with the President. They tell him that he may rely upon the people—they instruct him how far to insist in his negotiations, and how far to yield. At the present time, when we are probably on the eve of a war, an Address of this kind is peculiarly proper. As to the objections against Addresses approving measures, the whole of which we are not acquainted with—they go no farther than to sanction those acts which have come under our views.

He had been a little surprized by the remarks of the gentleman from Halifax in relation to an Address of this General Assembly to the President in the year 1798. If the gentleman would take the trouble of comparing that Address with the amendment which he had proposed, he would find that they were couched in nearly the same words.

Mr. H. said, he had observed, for several years past, that there were, here and there, little sets of men who busied themselves in stirring up sedition, and crying out *Wolf* against those who differed from them in opinion, endeavouring to bring into disrepute characters more deserving than themselves. He did not mean to make any particular allusions.—To these little men who will make it their business to proscribe others, he would only say, they go to their destination, from whence they will never rise.

He had flattered himself that the measure which he had proposed would have met the approbation of a decided majority of the House. It was his wish that the Legislature should do honor to themselves and to the illustrious character whom they addressed. He still believed a majority would be in favor of it. After it was received it would be open for amendment, and if proper, he should not object to such as might be proposed. He wished, at all events, a decision upon his amendment. If a majority were opposed to him in opinion, he should submit to their decision. But, until the house did decide, he should be in favor of his Address. He wished so steer clear of any thing which would irritate, by giving loose to their passions; he desired such an Address as their cool and deliberate judgment would approve. He hoped the motion of the gentleman from Newbern would be disagreed to. Those gentlemen who approve of the conduct of the

President, will of course vote against it. He wished not to hurt the feelings of any man; but surely if a majority appear in favor of an Address, we ought not to decline the measure because a few gentlemen are of a different opinion.

Mr. M. GIMPSEY was opposed to the motion for the Address to lie on the table. He did not wish to excite party spirit, but rather to allay it. He was unfriendly to the amendment of the gentleman from Craven, and decidedly in favor of the original address of the gentleman from Pasquotank, as being most expressive of the approbation which he felt for the illustrious President of the U. States, and of the desire he had that he would continue his services as President for another four years.

The yeas and nays on the question for the Addresses to lie on the table were taken. The members following were in the affirmative:

YEAS—Messrs. Abernathy, Arnold, J. C. Bryan, Brown, Caldwell, Cameron, Doud, Farnell, Gaston, Grist, Griffin, Houston, Hatch, Henderson, Wm. W. Jones, Wm. Johnston, Moring, May, Norwood, Pearson, Speed, Skinner, R. White, E. Williams, J. B. White.—25.

Mr. PORTER moved to recommit the Addresses to a select committee of both Houses. This course would have a tendency to allay the warmth of party spirit which had appeared; and it would also be a means of embodying the sense of the two houses; for he thought the Senate ought to have a share in the proposed Address. He proposed that five members from this house should be named upon this committee.

Mr. GLISSON seconded the motion; for he did not like either of the Addresses.

Mr. E. HARRIS saw no necessity for recommitting this subject. Sufficient time had already been consumed upon it. If an address pass the House, it will, of course, go to the Senate, and will be open for discussion and amendment there, so that it will be a joint act of the General Assembly. He hoped the House would proceed with the business; he wished to get rid of it.

Mr. C. JONES called the yeas and nays upon the question. It was his desire of the mover to conciliate, and it was his desire also. He did not like either of the Addresses offered, tho' he was in favor of some Address, and he was not at present prepared with an amendment.

The question was taken and negatively, 73 to 39.

Mr. C. JONES then moved to amend the amendment of the gentleman from Newbern, by adding after the words "Great Britain," "so far as have come to our knowledge."

The Speaker pronounced this motion out of order. No amendment could be received to an amendment.

Mr. SKINNER had not intended to have risen on this subject; but the yeas and nays being called, he wished to give the reasons which would govern his vote, which would be in favor of the amendment offered by the gentleman from Craven, because he thought it more dignified and consistent than the Address proposed by the gentleman from Pasquotank. Is it becoming in this Legislature (said Mr. S.) to use such expressions as he found in the Address of the gentleman from Pasquotank? Is it not the duty of the Legislature to conciliate, rather than provoke party spirit? This Address states, "when the union of these States is endangered by the machinations of a disappointed party, who have sought to subvert, because they could not direct the measures of government." This passage, the gentleman from Halifax says, has an allusion to Burr and his adherents only. But Mr. S. did not believe this would be the general impression on reading the Address; and indeed he apprehended it was intended to apply to others.—If not, why did the gentleman from Pasquotank mention Federalists, and say that a Federalist was concerned in drafting the amendment. It could only be with a view of stirring up party spirit. He did not think it either dignified or necessary to say to the President of the U. States, "We will not review the eminent advantages derived from your talents and virtues, whilst employed in high and responsible offices at home; nor will

the limits of an Address permit us to enumerate the blessings which have flowed from the administration of our public affairs since the memorable period of 1801." Does this language agree with the assertion of the gentleman from Halifax, that Burr's party alone was alluded to—Did Burr's treasonable projects exist in the year 1801? They did not, and this shews that Burr's was not the party alluded to. Where is the necessity (Mr. S. asked) of bringing into view, in this Address, all the benefits received from Mr. Jefferson? Has he done more than he promised to do on entering into office, or than gentlemen expected from him? He believed not, and he could see no dignity in thanking a man for having done his duty. But the gentleman from Halifax says, that if a servant has done well, there is no harm in saying to him, "Well done good and faithful servant." Admitting there is no harm in it, where is the advantage? Will it not have a tendency to raise factions in our country, which appear to grow upon us insensibly? He feared it would, tho' the friends of the measure affected to treat these fears as imaginary.

Mr. S. was in favor of this amendment on another ground. The proposition of the gentleman from Pasquotank calls upon the President to again offer his services. Suppose he accepts of our invitation, have we the power to confer the office upon him? We have not. The objections to this part of the Address had been so well expressed by the gentleman from Craven, that he would not repeat them.

Mr. S. concluded with saying he should vote for the amendment under consideration, though he did not altogether approve it.

Mr. PEARSON should not have spoken on this subject, had not the Speaker decided that the amendment now before the house could not be amended. Though he was ready to pledge to the President of the U. S. for himself and the people whom he represented, that they were ready to come forward with their lives and fortunes to defend their insulted country, yet he was not prepared to give an unqualified assent to all the measures of the President, before he knew what were the steps he had taken in relation to our dispute with Great Britain. He was also opposed to administering the dose of sugar and water prepared by the gentleman from Pasquotank. He would vote for the amendment in preference to that, though he wished to go no further than to pledge himself and constituents to support and defend the rights of their country.

Mr. BAKER would take notice only of two objections made to the Address of the gentleman from Pasquotank. It had been said that our soliciting the President to continue in office for another four years, is humiliating. He called the attention of the gentlemen to the solicitations which were made to General Washington, when he had expressed an intention to go out of office. It was said by more than one of his Historians, that he was induced to continue in office from the solicitations which flowed in upon him from various quarters. We have heard that he was addressed by this Legislature, whether on this subject he did not know. This is not the first instance of a Legislature addressing Mr. Jefferson approving his conduct, and requesting his continuance in office. Several had done it, and it was probable others would do so, in the course of the winter.

With respect to the proceedings of the Legislature of Virginia, which had been alluded to, the resolutions of that body were intended to approve the conduct of the majority in Congress, and to cast a censure on the minority. Mr. B. said if the Address of the gentleman from Pasquotank were to be rejected because it solicits the President to continue his services, the amendment under consideration was equally objectionable; though not so pointedly expressed. To confirm this remark, Mr. B. read the concluding clause of the amendment.

Mr. B. objected to that part of the amendment which referred to our dispute with G. Britain. It spoke