



Disperse the plans of fair, delightful peace, Unwieldy by party rage, to live like Brothers.

THURSDAY JANUARY 7, 1808.

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DEBATE

Addressing the President of the States.

Friday, December 11.

(CONTINUED.)

Mr. HAMILTON was sorry to observe that in this subject had created considerable warmth in the House. It was true that the Address originated amongst the Republican members, but there was nothing in it, in his opinion, calculated to wound the feelings of Federalists. He did not wish to deprive these gentlemen of their opinions; they were as well entitled to theirs, as he was to his. It seemed strange, however, that the very first mention of this subject, should have produced irritation amongst these gentlemen. Are they ashamed of the term Federalist? Do they wish to change it for another? They cannot take the term Republican in exchange for it; because a Republican and a Federalist are so opposed to each other in political opinion, that they cannot be associated together. A Republican-Federalist cannot exist. A man must be either a Federalist or a Republican. He cannot be both. He feels no enmity, however, towards Federalists. He believed they might be as honest as good citizens, as Republicans, and he wished them to enjoy their sentiments; and he hoped they would allow him the like privilege.

It appeared to be the opinion of the gentleman from Edenton, that it was the intention of the framers of the Address which he had offered to cast a stigma on the Federal Party. He declared he knew of no such design. And if gentlemen will but examine the papers they will find that it will not bear such an interpretation. Will any man say, because another is a Federalist, he has a design to overthrow the government? The passage could not be so applied, except gentlemen are determined to take it to themselves.

That part of the Address which refers to Mr. Jefferson's services abroad and mentions the memorable period of 1801, is objected to. The services performed by Mr. Jefferson are known and acknowledged; and what was our situation prior to 1801? Even the spilling of a little hot water by some inoffensive citizens, had like to have been magnified into a civil war by the misconduct of government. But, since that period, instead of war, we have had peace and tranquility. A vast extension of territory has been added to our country by fair purchase; which, if federal measures had prevailed, would have cost us a war to obtain. We are therefore greatly indebted to Mr. Jefferson, & ought, on this occasion, to express our obligations to him.

With respect to that part of the Address which invites the President to continue in office, he could see no objection to it. Washington was invited in the same way. The services of Washington were great; so were the services of Jefferson, and we have the same right to call upon him that the citizens heretofore had to call upon Washington to continue his services.

Gentlemen opposed to this Address have taken every step in their power to destroy it. They have proposed to amend it, to lay it over altogether, to re-commit it; but he did not believe they would be able to effect their purpose. He objected to the amendment as being too languid in its expression, and too general; as being addressed more to the government than the President. Mr. Madison might as well receive the Address as the President; and when it expresses a wish that his life may be spared that his country may have the benefit of his illustrious talents, it might apply to his filling the office of Secretary of State, or that of a Minister abroad, or say to him, if you choose, go to your retreat, and let us hear no more of you. He hoped the amendment would be disagreed to, and the address which he had offered be adopted.

Mr. HARRIS said, a remark had fallen from the gentleman from War-

ren, which had no foundation in the amendment which he had offered. He alluded to what the gentleman had said about our government being in fault in our dispute with G. Britain. How such an idea could have occurred to the gentleman he could not tell.

It had been said that similar Addresses to the present had been sent to General Washington. He never heard of such an Address being sent from any Legislature. That man, who was revered above any other, would have frowned upon such an Address. That he was addressed very frequently he knew, but never to request him to become a candidate, never at least by any of the State Legislatures. But if he had, this would not change his opinion as to the impropriety of the measure. Mr. H. concluded by saying, that he cordially approved the Administration of Mr. Jefferson; though he would not say he approved it from alpha to omega.

The question on Mr. Harris's amendment was then taken by Yeas and Nays as follows:

YEAS—Abernathy, Arnold, Atkinson, J. C. Bryan, J. Bryan, Blackman, Brown, Dymon, Barringer, Caldwell, Cochran, Cameron, Cooke, Davidson, Deans, Farnell, Grist, Gillaspie, Gless, n. Gaston, Hoskins, Houston, Hannah, J. Harris, Hatch, Henderson, E. Harris, W. W. Jones, E. Jones, C. Jones, W. Johnson, James, Leonard, C. Lanier, Moore, Morng, May, M'Leannan, Niswood, Porter, Jesse Pearson, Perry, Shaw, Skinner, Sexton, Thompson, Vauhook, Jas. Williams, Walters, Jona. Williams, Wooten, R. White, E. Williams, J. B. Whit, Wade, H. Yancey.—36.

NAYS—Jos. H. Bryan, Bell, Burton, Boon, Bunn, Boazman, Baser, Bataaru, Collins, Carter, Cotton, Cradle, Cator, J. Cherry, Daniel, Eason, Forsythe, Fraser, Griffin, Goodwin, Headen, Higgins, Harrison, Hoyle, Hamilton, Horn, Harden, W. Hulme, Howell, Lindsay, T. Love, F. Lanier, S. Lanier, Leatherman, Mebane, M'Gimpse, M'Intire, Moody, Mason, Norcum, Perkins, Pickens, Roberts, Ruzel, Richardson, Ruffin, R. d. d. c. Rowland, Sheppard, M. Scott, Salmons, J. Smith, D. Scott, Tate, Theams, Toole, Townsend, Terrell, R. Williams, Wm. Williams, Wyne, J. Yancey.—63.

Mr. C. JONES moved the House adjourn. The motion was negatived.

Mr. GASTON said, it would be recollected that the friends of the Address have all along declared, that where it speaks of "a party who have sought to subvert," &c. it had no allusion to the Federal Party. It had been declared, that there would be no objection to have the expression differently modified, if desired. He moved therefore to strike out the word party and insert "disappointed man and his adherents."

[The question was now on agreeing to the original resolution.]

Mr. C. JONES.—I am one of those who think that on this occasion it is right and proper to address the President of the United States. It is a custom sanctioned by the practice of former legislatures; and I see no reason, I have heard none offered, to convince me that we ought to abstain from that practice, and withhold an Address on the present occasion; on the contrary, I am decidedly of opinion, that such an Address as will assure the National Government of our determination to support its measures in regard to the existing disputes with foreign nations—as will express the necessary degree of confidence in the Chief Magistrate, is absolutely required of us by the situation of the country and the circumstances of the times. We are supposed to be on the eve of a war with Great-Britain—our old and long existing disputes with Spain remain unsettled—from France we have recently received insult and aggression—our country has been threatened with all the horrors of civil war. In such a situation it is certainly proper and necessary that the nation should know its strength—that it should be able to ascertain the extent of its union—that there should be a mutual confidence between the General and State Governments—that in times of peril and danger the administration might be assured where it could look for prompt and energetic support. I have already joined in an Address to the President in one capacity, and I would now willingly address him in another; and I could wish the only question now was whether we should present him with

such an Address as was proper, and required by the circumstances of the times, or whether we should present none at all. In such a case I should feel myself relieved from the necessity of addressing this. I should remain silent, confident that its patriotism would make the proper decision; and under the hope that we should be placed in an alternative where it would be so easy and so agreeable to decide. I voted against the motion for the Address with its amendments to lie on the table; believing that the patriotism, the understanding, and the taste of this House would dictate an Address in which every member of it could heartily concur. But when I see the temperate Address proposed by the gentleman from Craven, rejected—when I see negatived a motion to commit the whole to the revision of a committee—when I see retained and forced upon our unwilling decision an Address humiliating in its manner and destructive in its principles, I can neither yield my assent to its adoption, nor can I suffer it to pass and remain silent. I must therefore ask the indulgence of the House while I state, in a few words, the objections I have to it; and I must be permitted also to premise, that after the display of eloquence and argument which has been made by gentlemen whose talents are so greatly superior to my own, I do not indulge the vain expectation of being able to add much, if any thing, to influence the votes of this house; but shall rest satisfied with merely being able to justify my own.

The language of this Address is remarkable for its servile and debasing style, and for its extravagant & unqualified terms of flattery. In such instances often recurred, men of literature might deplore the depravity of taste, but politicians would regard it as the doxage of Liberty, as symptoms of that constitutional decay which was sinking into slavery. That the Address is such a word would be improper and unbecoming in us to offer, I have no doubt; that it will be unacceptable to the President, I am almost equally certain. It is a dose that I am sure is much too strong for the stomach of so modest a man as Mr. Jefferson is reputed to be. His gorge must rise at it. Even the moderate complimentary style which is usual in addresses, and which is frequently offered to the President, is never even noticed in his answers; and this is so very much overcharged, that were it to be presented by a body of less notoriety than the Legislature of North-Carolina, its authenticity might very reasonably be questioned.

It has, Sir, been considered inconsistent with the character of an inflexible Republican, to assail any man while clothed in power with sycophantic addresses. It has been said, that it was calculated to undermine the integrity of his principles, to infuse into his mind the poison of ambition, or to lead him to overstep the bounds of his duty, in search of popular applause. Mr. Jefferson, it is well known, has always discouraged such addresses as that on your table. His modest virtue shrinks from the fulsome compliments of prostituted adulation. He, I trust, is seeking to establish a solid edifice of fame, and is not endeavouring to catch the fleeting compliments of the hour. Every man who has power has flatterers, and I am sure the good sense of Mr. Jefferson will not be gratified by language that has been prostituted in the praise of every tyrant and usurper, from Caesar & Cataline down to Robespierre and Bonaparte. Those, therefore, who wish to address the President from motives of respect, will choose to do it in more chaste and less exceptional language.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are objections to this Address which, in my mind, have much more weight than those which relate merely to style. That part of it which goes to solicit Mr. Jefferson to become once more, a Candidate for the Presidency, is totally repugnant to the principles which were avowed by him and his friends before & about the time of his coming into office. It was then maintained to be a fundamental republican principle, that

there should be a frequent rotation in office, and this was one among the many reasons urged against the re-election of Mr. Adams. It was said, that no matter how popular a President might be, no matter how great his talents, or however eminent his services, he should still be watched with a jealous eye, and not be empowered, by a long continuance in office, to employ his popularity in a manner hostile to the constitutional rights of the people; and that on this occasion the electoral privilege of the citizens ought to be exercised to supply a defect in the constitution. If those doctrines were true eight years ago, they are true at this day; and I hope gentlemen are willing to do more justice to Mr. Jefferson than to admit that they are made use of only as shall suit electioneering purposes. If it shall be said, that the rule, though good, may be suspended on great emergencies, or in favour of a great character, the principle itself is gone; for pretexts to violate it will never be wanting. That these were the sentiments which prevailed about the time of the first election of Mr. Jefferson, is notorious; and to vindicate him from the charge of having employed them to answer a temporary purpose, I can produce undeniable proof that they are his fixed principles. Many circumstances might be adduced to prove this, but I will mention only one, as it is in itself abundantly sufficient. When Mr. Eppes, the son-in-law of the President, and who is known to be in his confidence, and to speak his sentiments, was a candidate for the seat which he now holds in Congress, he declared that one of the motives which led him to offer was, to endeavour to effect an amendment to the constitution, whereby a man who had once served a constitutional term as President, should ever after be ineligible to that office. It is true, Mr. Eppes has either forgotten his promise, or he has been prevented from attending to it by his mind being occupied by more important concerns, or he delays it to some more convenient time; but his principles have been avowed, and it is well known the President participates in them. Shall we, then, courteously ask him to renounce them; to renounce what has contributed its share to gain him the esteem and confidence of the nation? Or shall we ask him to prove, by his conduct, that he was not sincere in his declarations? Sir, I cannot conceive of any measure more disrespectful to himself, or more unjust to his principles. It would be derogatory in him to depart from them. It would be indelicate in the extreme in us to ask him to do so.

But, admitting that no anti-republican precedent is established in investing Mr. Jefferson once more with the Presidency—Is he to be allured to it by this humble supplication of ours? Do we doubt his patriotism? Do we suspect his want of attachment to the interests of the nation? The language of this Address certainly implies a doubt that wholly destroys the effects of its compliments. Besides, is not every citizen of the United States subject to the public will? Shall we not command or refuse their services as we think proper? It is too humiliating, too degrading, to invest a fellow-citizen with a little brief authority, and then come cringing to his footstool to ask, as a gracious boon, that he will continue to exercise his authority over us. What would Cato have said, in the best times of Rome, had a fawning Senate approached him with such language? Would he not have blushed for their degeneracy, and have felt himself disgraced by their proposal? If Mr. Jefferson is animated with one ray of Roman dignity and virtue (as I trust he is with many) he will indignantly spurn such a petition.

It has been said, Sir, by the gentleman from Pasquotank, that the United States possess no other citizen besides Mr. Jefferson who is worthy of being intrusted with the Presidency; and the style of this Address implies an expression of the same sentiment. I am unwilling, Sir, to believe that this House will by its solemn vote countenance such

an opinion. Such an unwarrantable confidence in one man, such an unreasonable distrust of every other (if it really exists) is fraught with dangers that will ultimately destroy every vestige of our liberty and independence. What has the history of the world taught us is the effect of such debasing sentiments. We need not go back to Greece or Rome, or to past ages, for an example: we have recently had one exhibited before our eyes. We have seen the Republicans of France hailing Bonaparte as the only person capable of saving it; we have seen popular addresses pouring in upon him from all parts of the nation; to be cringing & fulsome was there considered an infallible and essential mark of patriotism. He first consented to be consul for 10 years, then Consul for life with the privilege of naming his successor, and last of all, he was invested with the imperial purple, and now governs his cringing minions with a rod of iron. Have we the same blind, implicit confidence in an individual? Are we prepared to travel the same downward course? Shall we say with Shakespeare's Cassius that

"Our country doth contain but one man
"Who doth bestride the narrow world
"Like a Colossus, and we petty men
"Walk under his huge legs & peep about,
"To find ourselves dishonourable graves?"

This is indeed the very spirit of the proposed Address; that we possess "but one man." And shall we label the talents and virtue of our country by giving it the sanction of our vote? I hope not. I hope we shall be actuated by a more just regard for our national character than to make so dishonourable an avowal. I would shut my eyes upon the hateful picture that would force upon my unwilling belief the conviction of its truth; and even if I perceived its justice, I would still retain so much of the pride of country as to scorn to confess it. You cannot keep a nation free against its will, and a better perish at once; than to lean for support on any individual who will certainly want the power, if he even has the will, to support the tottering fabric of the state. But has our infant Republic, the best hope of the world, a nation of yesterday, thus prematurely arrived to this stage of decrepitude? No, I cannot, I will not believe it. We want neither virtue nor talents. A great man is, for the most part, one who has been lifted into notice by a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances & events, and not by any uncommon qualities by which he is peculiarly distinguished from the rest of the human race. If Mr. Jefferson is unwilling or thinks it improper that he should be again invested with the Presidency, I trust we have hundreds of as good men to supply his place; and I say this with all due respect for his character and talents. I cannot, indeed, go the length of some gentlemen in my commendation, and say that I approve of all the acts of his administration. This sweep of approbation, in my mind, savours too strongly the monarchical doctrine that the "the King can do no wrong." But as I can look upon the measures of Mr. Jefferson's administration without prejudice of any kind, I think my opinion of it is sufficiently favourable; and since the occasion extorts it from me, I will descend to particulars and say, that the system of economy which he has introduced into all the departments of government I admire; & his love of peace meets my approbation and applause; and if he conducts us safely along, without sacrificing the national honour or the interests of the people, even scepticism itself must admit, that his administration will be a prosperous one, and entitle him to great honour. But is the merit of Mr. Jefferson to disparage that of the whole nation? I trust not.

Another and very important objection which I feel to this most objectionable part of the Address is, that we are usurping powers that do not belong to us, and are invading a constitutional right of the people. We cannot rightfully exercise the