

SPEECH

Delivered at the Great Whig Meeting in the County of Granville, on Tuesday, the 3d day of March, 1840, by GEORGE E. BADGER, Esq. and published at the request of his Fellow Citizens:

Mr. CHAIRMAN:—I avail myself of the invitation which has just been given me to express my opinions to this meeting of my Fellow Citizens, on the condition and prospects of our country. We have certainly much to demand a careful scrutiny, and not a little to excite anxiety and alarm. Eleven years ago, the present Administration assumed the management of public affairs. The general condition of the country was then sound—the currency and exchanges, trade and business, were in a satisfactory state; and in all the pursuits of life, industry and prudence commanded the reward to which they are entitled. Whatever abatements in some particulars ought to qualify this statement, its general truth and correctness cannot be justly questioned—and with regard to the currency, is subject to no abatement. We were then, upon the whole, a happy and flourishing people. What has been the effect of these eleven years upon our affairs? What is our situation now? Surely no one is so ignorant as not to know, that our situation is materially changed for the worse—that this effect has been injurious and even disastrous. We were told that our currency (the best in the world) was not good enough, and that we must have a better. To accomplish this, a course of experiments was commenced upon the Banking, and Credit system—upon the property and industry of the country. Each experiment was ushered in with the promise of golden results; and though each in time was followed by a signal failure, the assurance was still as strong in favour of the next; and, we were told, that a little faith and patience, would enable us to reap from that, the harvest of which the former had been found so barren. The great good—the highest blessing which our rulers promised us—was a hard money currency—an entire specie circulation—and from time to time, during these years of experiment, the month, almost the day was fixed, when the paper rags should disappear, and a golden shower should fill our purses. But still, as the appointed time approached, it was found convenient or necessary to postpone the accomplishment, till another and more distant day. And how stands it with us now? After the ten years of patience and suffering—constant fluctuations in the prices of labor and of produce—are we any nearer to the golden age of prosperity? By no means. The price of our staples is now depreciated beyond all experience, since the war of 1812. Cotton, for example, even in the favoured region of Alabama, is selling at 5 cents; our debts are unpaid, and money daily becoming scarcer. The Bank notes, indeed, are disappearing, but alas! no approach is yet made to the hard money substitute. Meantime, a bankruptcy seems to have overtaken the Treasury of the nation. A short time ago, our revenue was so large, overflowing even beyond the extravagant expenditures of the Administration, that it was necessary to devise some way to dispose of the surplus, in order to avoid the inconvenience and danger of a large accumulation. It was concluded to ask the States to take charge of this superfluous fund, and an Act was passed for its distribution, but scarce had the execution of the law commenced, when it was found necessary to suspend it. The public coffers were empty, and at every session of Congress since the election of Mr. Van Buren, loans have been required to defray the expenses of the Government. On every application it has been urged, that the want was merely temporary—that instead of a regular loan, an issue of Treasury notes for the moment was all that could be required, and that the immediate pressure over the ordinary revenue would answer all the demands upon it. But these opinions, like the promises of a specie circulation, have been doomed to disappointment—at each session, new reasons have been found for new issues of Treasury notes, and they seem now to have become the regular mode of supplying the public necessities. They are preferred by the Administration, because they are loans in disguise—but however disguised, they are loans in fact, and show that our affairs have been grossly mismanaged, when in a time of peace with all foreign nations, and free from a national debt, the revenues of this great people are inadequate to maintain its government. This being the undeniable condition of the country, what is proposed by our rulers for the relief of the people? Literally nothing. Instead of learning wisdom from the past, and surrendering their unprincipled experiments upon all the institutions of the country, they still cry out against the Banks and the Merchants—against credit and industry, and renew their promises of hard money as the cure for all our evils. There is one difference however observable—formerly, we were promised immediate enjoyment of the great good, without a previous purgatory of preparation—now, all is left indefinite as to time; the President informs us that we must prepare to make great sacrifices—to bear our sufferings in patience, and at some distant day, and by some unexplained process of acquisition, the hard money will come and all will be well. But though nothing is proposed for the relief of the people, a plan is now urged forward for the relief of the Government and the assisting of the office-holders. This plan is the Sub-Treasury—the bill to establish it was passed in the Senate by less than the half of that body when full, and it was hurried through, though delay was urged upon the Administration party until the vacant seats could be filled, and though the state of things in the House was such as to prevent all hope that it could be acted on there for many weeks. In the House, the Administration party are now striving to make the contested seats from New Jersey depend not on the number of lawful votes, but on the majority of all the votes lawful and unlawful—good and bad,† in order to command a clear majority to carry out this scheme. This measure, after having been repeatedly condemned by Congress and the people, there is strong reason to fear will be passed at the present session; and as are the means used to obtain its passage, so is the character of the measure itself. It is called the "Independent Treasury," and so in one sense it is. It is independent of all connection with the business, of all sympathy with the distresses, of all efforts for the relief and assistance of the people; but it is totally dependent on Executive control—it is intended to place the purse of the nation in the hands of the President, and to enable him by the intervention of his thousand officers, concerned in the collection and disbursement of his hard money revenue, and the management of his grand Government Bank founded thereupon, to make us as dependent upon him as the treasury will be. But what is the measure? It proposes, when it shall be in full operation, a collection of all the dues to the public in hard money. If this shall not, in its consequences necessarily destroy all our banks, then we shall have one currency for the people, consisting of paper money, depreciated by the action of the Government, in which we are to receive and to pay our debts, and with which we are to be content; and another currency, consisting of Gold and Silver for the use of the Government and its officers and agents, in which all that owe the government, must pay, get it how they can—and then farewell, a long farewell, to the specie illusion—the hard money humbug, with which the people of this country have been so long amused. But if this measure shall oblige all our banks to wind up—as seems to be the opinion of those who have the best means of forming a correct judgment on the subject—if it shall destroy the usual credit system of the country, who can conceive the miserable consequences to our society? All debts to be collected without the usual facilities for obtaining funds—the price of labor and of produce, to be reduced to a specie standard, probably to one-third or one-half of the present amount. Fellow-Citizens, consider the matter for a moment, and endeavor to realize the results. How, under such circumstances, can a poor man, or a man of moderate means, pay his debts? If a mechanic or a laborer owes a few hundred dollars, which he is just able to pay when his wages are at one dollar and a half, or one dollar a day, how can he make payment when the debt remaining the same, the wages are reduced to three quarters or a half a dollar? If a man has purchased a piece of land, as an advantageous settlement for his increasing family at \$1000, and having paid half, its value is reduced to the specie standard, is not the part paid an entire loss?—the land being worth, in the whole, when measured by the new standard, just the moiety which remains unpaid. It is said that the price of every thing being reduced in the same proportion, the injurious consequences will not follow to those who owe nothing. Suppose this were so, how many of us will it comfort? How many of us are in that happy condition to owe no debts? And pray, is being in debt such a crime, that no sympathy is due, no care to be taken in the legislation of the country for the man that owes money? Is it sufficient to say those who owe no man any thing—those who are beforehand in the world—the creditor part of the nation will not suffer; and as to the rest, if people will be in debt, let them suffer. "This is most revolting doctrine." But is it true, that none but the debtor class will suffer? It is not true. Supposing that all prices should be affected here in the same ratio, it will not be the case with the prices of articles coming from abroad. These will not be affected by our legislation, but will remain at the old rates while the prices of domestic articles only will fall. What will be the consequence? With an income reduced one-half, every man's imported Sugar and Coffee, and Tea and Molasses, and Blankets and Woollens, &c. will remain at their full price. The poor man—the man who depends on his labor, or the proceeds of a small property to support a family, must reduce his wife and children to half allowance of some things which are absolute necessities, and of others which by long use have become necessities. A bitter day to a husband that, which takes away the refreshment of a cup of Coffee from his wife, and to a father, that which denies to his children the indulgencies to which they have been accustomed! And gloomy will be the evening which shows a family assembled around a board deprived of the usual comforts of their evening meal—when all are sure that the sacrifice is not made to their country, but to power—is not for good to them, but to enhance the splendor and luxurious enjoyments of their rulers!!

And who, sir, is to be benefited by this Sub-Treasury scheme? There are two classes that will gain by it. The office-holders are the first. It is no part of the Sub-Treasury bill to reduce the salaries of the officers—they are to remain at the full amount; and consequently, if prices are reduced one half, the process is exactly equivalent to doubling the salary of every officer—from the \$25,000 of the President to the \$1,000 or \$500 of the Clerks in the offices. All stand doubled in value. Well, then, may all who receive either salaries or fees from Government, press for the adoption of the Sub-Treasury. Another class who will gain by it, are those who are well off in the world—owe little or nothing—have large debts due them, or large sums of money to invest, and are besides, willing to speculate on the public distress; all, who having the means, are ready to lend on usurious interest, to shave notes at enormous discount—to attend execution and trust sales, and buy their less fortunate neighbours out of house and home. These will profit by the specie basis, and they know it well. Hence, you will observe, that in almost every instance, persons of this description are clamorous for the Sub-Treasury, and assure you it will do wonders for the Country—meaning for themselves. These two classes will find prosperly pouring in upon them with increasing streams—these will hasten forward to opulence—their palaces rise like exhalations—their equipages fly like meteors—as if to mock the general calamity which surrounds them. And while this calamity will involve all other classes of the community, let it be remembered, its weight will be still heaviest upon the poor, and those who are in moderate circumstances and owe money—others, it will deprive of their comforts; but these, it will overwhelm with hopeless ruin. This picture is not overcharged. There is every reason to suppose it falls far short of the dreadful reality. This, then, is the remedy for our evils offered by our considerate and experimenting rulers—considerate for themselves and their partisans—experimenting with cruel coolness upon the comfort and happiness of the country. What else do the Administration propose? The United States own a large amount of public lands—a domain held in trust by the Government, after the satisfaction of the public debt for the States of the Union—for North Carolina as well as the rest. What is Mr. Van Buren, with his party in Congress, about to do with these vast possessions? It was proposed by a distinguished Senator from Kentucky, to divide the proceeds of these lands amongst the several States; but the Administration insist on surrendering them to the States in which they are situated—on making a present of the share of North Carolina to these States. To what purpose? What is to be gained by it? Nothing that can be conceived, except the votes of those States, who receive the benefit, may be thereby gained for Mr. Van Buren. North Carolina has spoken with clearness and decision, against this dishonest disposition of her property—but her voice has been unheeded; she has declared her unwillingness to give up her share of the public lands as the price of votes for Mr. Van Buren; but he insists on making the bargain notwithstanding. Is the State prepared now for this surrender of her rights, which she so decidedly protested against fifteen months ago? Besides the injustice of the contemplated misapplication, the value of our interest makes it, as a pecuniary matter, of vast importance. Our share of the lands will amount probably to nearly fifty times the yearly revenue of the State. Vested at six per cent. it would produce a yearly income sufficient to defray all the ordinary charges of the State Government, and leave a large surplus applicable to the purpose of education and internal improvement.—Divided amongst the several counties according to their federal numbers, its yearly income would defray all the Public and County taxes—support the paupers, and build school-houses in every district of the Country. Who can think with patience of this vast treasure being squandered by our rulers in the prosecution of their ambitious schemes—plundered from the proper owners, and paid away as the purchase money for political support to Mr. Van Buren? Is North Carolina prepared for it? If she is not prepared, both for the Sub-Treasury, and the giving away of the public lands, she must oppose the re-election of Martin Van Buren. Both these measures are pressed for adoption, by men who will not regard your rights in the matter, because they are opposed to their own interests—and it is morally certain; if Mr. Van Buren shall be re-elected, that both these measures will be carried. It is idle—it is worse than idle—to say we will vote for the men, but oppose their measures—for you can in no other way support or oppose the measures, than by supporting or opposing the Administration which recommends them. Every man, therefore, who casts a vote for Van Buren, votes for the Sub-Treasury—and also declares his willingness to see the public lands given away—and should the State give her Electoral vote for him—she will, by that very act, support the Sub-Treasury, and at the same time make a voluntary surrender of her share of the vast public domain of the States.†

But, sir, we are not prepared—this County and this State are not prepared for this surrender. What then must we do? We must withdraw from Mr. Van Buren the support of the State, and bestow it elsewhere. The question then arises, shall we give it to Gen. Harrison? "Is he honest, is he capable, is he faithful to the Constitution?" No man should be our President who cannot abide this test. Let me then, bring Gen. Harrison to it, and if he shall be found wanting, let him be rejected:

GENERAL HARRISON.

In 1791, William Henry Harrison, then in his 19th year, was appointed an Ensign in the Army by Washington. At that time, the whole North-western frontier of the United States was overrun by hostile Indians. Ever since the close of the Revolutionary War, the torch and the tomahawk and the scalping-knife had been busily and fatally employed on our borders—many expeditions had been sent out, but had been defeated by these tribes, equally remarkable for their bravery and skill—and the loss we had sustained was estimated at more than fifteen hundred men. The generous heart of Harrison took fire at the sufferings inflicted on his countrymen, and leaving a safe and comfortable home, and abandoning the study of a profession by which he was preparing to win his way to fame and opulence, he hastened to the back woods to mingle in this Indian warfare, to chastise and repress the savage—to give peace and security to the settlers. At the great battle fought by Gen. Wayne, in which the Indians were signally defeated, Harrison, then a Lieutenant, acted as one of the General's aids, and by his gallant conduct, elicited the warm approbation of his Commander. Gen. Wayne, in his despatch giving an account of the battle, says, that he rendered "the most essential service," communicating his orders in every direction, and by his conduct and bravery, "exciting the troops to press for victory." Harrison continued in the army till 1797, when, finding there was no longer a probability of active service in the field, he threw up his commission, and was shortly afterwards appointed Secretary and Lieutenant Governor *ex officio* of the North-western Territory, then embracing all that vast tract of country lying North west of the Ohio river. The succeeding year, by a vote nearly unanimous, he was chosen the delegate of the Territory in Congress. Notwithstanding his youth, and that the House of Representatives had at that time many eminent men amongst its members, Harrison soon attained reputation and acquired general respect. Immediately after entering Congress, he directed his attention to the public lands. These had, up to that period, been sold in tracts of which the smallest contained 4000 acres, and consequently men of small property—the actual settlers—the hardy pioneers of the west, could not purchase directly from Government, and the lands were falling into the hands of Capitalists and Speculators. Under Harrison's auspices, Congress were induced to adopt a better and more liberal plan. The lands were laid off in lots alternately of 640 and 320 acres, and thus the man of small means was enabled to purchase in quantities to suit his funds and at the prices of the Government. Thus the western country became settled with a hardy and industrious population, and the East pouring forth its redundant population, has established a Western Empire beyond the mountains. In 1801, he was appointed Governor of Indiana by President Adams, and in the same year was named by President Jefferson, sole Commissioner to treat with the Indians. In 1809, he was re-appointed Governor of Indiana, by Mr. Madison, and on the 7th of November 1811, he fought the Battle of Tippecanoe—in which he signalled both his skill and bravery, and broke the force and spirits of the Indians by a most disastrous defeat. Of this engagement the President made mention in his next Annual Message to Congress, and spoke in the most complimentary terms of the "spirit and fortitude" of the troops, and "the collected firmness which distinguished their Commander, on an occasion requiring the utmost exertion of valor and discipline"—and for his conduct in this campaign, the General Assembly of Kentucky pronounced him "a Hero and a Patriot," and declared him entitled to "the warmest thanks of the Nation, for his cool, deliberate and gallant conduct" in the battle of Tippecanoe. In 1812, shortly after the declaration of War against Great Britain, he was appointed, by Mr. Madison, Commander in Chief of the North-western Army, and on the 5th of October 1813, he closed a year of unwearied assiduity and devoted service, by the glorious battle of the Thames; in which he defeated a superior force of British and Indians, commanded by the savage Proctor, and put an end to the War on our Northwestern borders. When the news of this victory reached Washington, the thanks of Congress were voted to Gen. Harrison, and his conduct was the theme of applause from one end of the country to the other. This battle closed Gen. Harrison's military life. In 1816, he was elected a member of the House of Representatives from Ohio, but was not re-elected at the close of his term, on account of his vote with the South on the Missouri question, which gave dissatisfaction to his constituents; but, in 1824, he was chosen a Senator of the United States, and certainly it may be said with truth, that during his service in Congress, he distinguished himself by his eloquence, talents and attention to the business of the country. No subject during Harrison's Congressional life occupied

more of his attention, than the Pension system for the relief of the Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution. As a Soldier, he knew the dangers and privations of war—as a Statesman, he realized the value of our glorious Constitution—and as a Patriot, his heart was filled with grateful admiration of the fortitude and valour, and with deep sympathy for the destitution and poverty, too often the lot of the remains of that noble band of heroes. Hence, he took an active part in forwarding every plan for their relief, and in giving the most extensive operation to the public provision in their favour. In 1828, he was appointed by Mr. Adams, Minister to the Republic of Colombia, from which station being recalled by Gen. Jackson, soon after his accession to office, Gen. Harrison has not since been in public life. While in Colombia, Harrison addressed a letter to Bolivar, the military dictator of that country, breathing the purest spirit of attachment to our Republican institutions, and showing a just estimate of the nature of those public services by which a claim to confidence is established. I wish that time would permit my submitting to your attention the whole of this admirable letter. Take these quotations as specimens of the whole, and avail yourselves of the first opportunity to become acquainted with every sentence it contains. "I contend that the strongest of all governments is that which is most free. We consider that of the U. States as the strongest, precisely because it is the most free." "In bestowing the palm of merit, the world has become wiser than formerly—the successful warrior is no longer regarded as entitled to the first place in the temple of fame." "To be esteemed eminently great, it is necessary to be eminently good.—The qualities of the hero and the general, must be devoted to the advantage of mankind, before he will be permitted to assume the title of their benefactor; and the station which he will hold in their regard and affections, will depend, not on the number and splendour of his victories, but upon the results, and the use he may make of the influence he acquires from them."

Thus I have given you an imperfect sketch of the chief events in the life of Harrison, but to understand fully his claims upon our confidence and regard, we should attentively consider his whole course both public and private. We should recollect that his services against the enemies of his country have been rendered under more than the usual difficulties, dangers and privations attending war—that he at all times voluntarily surrendered the superior comforts which his rank enabled, and (in the minds of most men) would have justified him in using. In the winter campaigns of a northern latitude—in the midst of snow and tempest, his whole wardrobe occupied but a single valise, and his bedding consisted of but a single blanket, strapped during the day upon the saddle on which he rode—that as he shared the privations, so he met the same dangers with the common soldier; and that always where the public service either required or permitted; as he was first in station, so he was first in peril, in toils, in sufferings, for the country he loved and served. It should be remembered also, that the civil offices he held, conferred on him the largest discretionary powers, demanded the utmost judgment and fortitude, the brightest qualities of mind, the steadiest determination of a patriotic spirit. The Governor of Indiana from 1800 to 1812, had no soft and luxurious post of power and patronage without danger and difficulty, but one; on the contrary, requiring continual sacrifices of comfort, of personal convenience and safety—and bringing daily upon him the anxieties, incident to such a border administration; of providing for the safety of the settlers and their helpless wives and children, from the cruelty and crimes of numerous warlike and hostile tribes of Indians. It should be recollected too, that as Governor of Indiana, and *ex-officio* Chief Agent for disposing of the public lands, he had daily opportunities of enriching himself by speculation—and yet such was the purity of his principles, that even the busy malice of his personal enemies and party assailants has not insinuated that his integrity, even in a single instance, yielded to temptation. We should dwell upon the reflection, that armed with large powers, civil and military, for many years, no instance is known or pretended, in which he ever offered wrong or insult even to the humblest of his fellow-citizens—that his powers and influence have been always used for the advancement of merit—for smoothing the way of honest poverty in its movements towards independence—for the promotion of the common good of all classes of his fellow-citizens. And we should pause with tender pleasure over the victorious General, when, after the battle of the Thames, he resigned his solitary blanket to a wounded British officer, and thus realized a most touching conception of that noble benevolence which belongs to true courage, and which sees in a suffering enemy a friend and brother. Fellow-Citizens, cannot such a man be trusted? If we consider "the number and splendour of his victories"—if we consider his long and arduous, and self-denying services, and above all, if we consider, to use his own words—"their results and the use he has made of the influence he has acquired," must we not pronounce him eminently good, and therefore eminently great—worthy to be the deliverer of a great Nation.

But perhaps there may be something in his particular opinions on questions which now agitate the country, rendering him an unsafe depository of our confidence notwithstanding his hard services and his general excellence. Is it so, or is it not? Many charges are made against him. I will notice a few of those which are urged with much vehemence, and from which his opponents seem to hope the greatest effect.

GEN. HARRISON'S OPINIONS ON THE TARIFF.

First: It is said that Gen. Harrison is so much in favor of a Protective Tariff, that he would insist upon its continuance, though, under its operation "the grass were found to grow in the streets of Norfolk and Charleston." This charge is a gross and wanton calumny upon Gen. Harrison, and the ingenious author of it might, by the same skill and fairness, convict the inspired writer of the Psalms of Atheism, for, by striking out from the first verse of the 53d Psalm these words, "the fool hath said in his heart," we shall have this proposition left, "there is no God," as one belonging to David, instead of the fool whom he rebukes. This charge against Gen. Harrison is attempted to be sustained by a process precisely similar. The language attributed to him, was really used by a distinguished Virginian, as expressing his view of the operation of the Tariff, and Gen. Harrison, referring to and quoting his language, instead of declaring, as is falsely attributed to him, a disposition to press the Protective Policy to the ruin of Southern Commerce, expressed in truth, as the authors of the charge against him well know, a sentiment precisely the contrary—He said that if the Tariff would produce the ruinous consequences attributed to it by the gentleman alluded to, he would instantly, "give his voice for its modification or entire repeal." So far is Gen. Harrison from being influenced by the base and selfish views attributed to him, that he has been governed, respecting the Tariff, by the most lofty and generous sentiments, declaring, that though he looked upon a Protective Tariff, indispensable to the advancement of the North-western States, yet, it should not be continued, if its effects were injurious to the Southern States, for, (said this calumniator but disinterested Patriot,) "no honest man can enjoy a prosperity founded upon the sufferings of a friend and brother." But why is the subject of the Tariff brought forward at all? It was settled years ago by the Compromise Act. Who proposes to disturb it? Who desires to increase the duties? Certainly neither Gen. Harrison nor any of his friends. But the Administration has lately recommended to Congress the propriety of increasing some of the duties, or of imposing duties on some articles received under the Compromise bill, duty free. Then how stands Mr. Van Buren affected towards this subject? Is he an advocate of a Protective Tariff? You will scarcely discover from what he says, for "non committal" is his rule; but if you look at his acts, you will find that he has been foremost among those, who carry furthest the Protective System. He voted for the Tariff of 1824, and for that of 1828. In 1816, he was not in Congress, and consequently had no opportunity of voting for the Tariff of that year. The bill of 1828, was deemed so oppressive by the South, that its familiar appellation with us has been "the bill of abominations," and it was this bill which drove South Carolina into Nullification, and very nearly produced a civil war. To this odious and revolting measure, Mr. Van Buren, now called (God help the mark!) the "Northern man with Southern principles," gave his hearty support in the Senate; yet the choice spirits of the Administration have the effrontery to denounce Gen. Harrison for supporting a Tariff, and call upon us to support Mr. Van Buren as opposed to Protective duties.

UNITED STATES BANK.

Next it is said, that Gen. Harrison favours a Bank of the United States. This charge is false. His opinions, on the contrary, are against a Bank. He has declared it an institution, which, as President, he would not recommend, but he has declared also, that if the experiment should be fairly tried, whether the financial operations of the Government can be carried on without the aid of a National Bank, and it should be "clearly ascertained that the public interest would materially suffer without one," and if there were "unequivocal manifestations of public opinion in its favour, he would sanction a bill for chartering a Bank with proper modifications and restrictions." And is not this a just and proper view of the duty of a President? Gen. Harrison holds that as President, he should be bound to yield his private opinion to a clear manifestation of the settled convictions of Congress and the country—that he should not be authorised to set at naught the National will, satisfactorily ascertained, after full enquiry and deliberation, but would feel bound to respect a mature expression of the public opinion, or in other words, "the sober second thoughts of the People." Mr. Van Buren, on the contrary, claims for himself to be a component part of the Legislature, and declares his determination to use his veto against any expression of public sentiment, however well considered and often repeated. Whatever may be thought of these conflicting opinions in other respects, it can admit of no question which is the more Republican, and Gen. Harrison has the satisfaction to know that he entertains the opinion, and is following the example of the illustrious Madison.

(To be continued in Tuesday's paper.)

† I have treated the present and last Administration as one, because Mr. Van Buren professes but to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor. See Appendix.

† See Appendix.