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ADDRESS

Of the Democratic Young Men of Pennsylvania, assembled in Convention at Harrisburg, to the citizens of the Commonwealth, July 4, 1836.

FELLOW CITIZENS—During the last few months, the democratic young men have met together, in nearly every county of this commonwealth, and with a unanimity and zeal, perhaps, without a precedent, expressed their views in regard to its present political position, and their determination to exert all their energies for maintaining and restoring sound republican principles and practice. To this end they have chosen the delegates, now assembled in convention, to represent the sentiments that are entertained from one end of our commonwealth to the other: and, with that determined unity of action, that generous harmony of feeling which become brethren of the same principle, contending in a great and honorable cause, to decide on and to recommend measures in accordance with those sentiments. From forty-five of the fifty-three counties of this commonwealth, delegates thus chosen are in actual attendance. Their numbers form an aggregate of four hundred and fifty-three democratic citizens. Such a circumstance is cheering to every advocate of democracy, since it shows how excited and how diffused is the spirit that prevails.—Such a circumstance makes us bold in the sentiments we express, and the measures we propose, since it gives evidence, which neither sophistry can pervert nor calumny deny, that they emanate, with singular unanimity, from every portion of the republican family.

Citizens of Pennsylvania! We are drawing near to the close of an eventful struggle. The great controversy, in which are involved the essential principles of democracy, must end in a few short months in their destruction or triumph. The indications of triumph are too apparent to be doubted; but if they were less evident, it would not be less sure. This is not the first time that a contest has been waged, and such a triumph achieved. It will not be the last while your yet unconquered spirit shall prevail.

In every country where the seed of liberty has been sown, there has ever been the same contest between those who trust in and would extend the power of the people, and those who dread and would restrain it. To claim superior intelligence, to ask for wealth superior privileges, to distrust the temper, the wisdom and the measures of the mass of a community, and to offer, with complacent vanity, to save them from themselves; these are the sentiments of the one class, often frankly avowed, always perhaps confidently cherished. On the other hand, the friends of popular ascendancy believe it just to extend equal political privileges to every citizen: that it is impolitic and wrong to invest any portion with superior advantages or exclusive powers, capable of abuse; that the surest trust is in the judgment and the conduct of a majority of the people; and that the true end of the government is, to preserve the rights and liberties of every one, with the least possible restraint. The age may vary and the nation; but wherever anything like freedom of opinion has prevailed, this line of distinction has been invariably drawn. It is the line which has forever separated the aristocrat, the conservative, the federalist from the democrat, the liberal, the republican; the disciples of Hamilton and of Adams, from those proud to acknowledge the same rules of political conduct, with Jefferson and Jackson.

Once heretofore in the history of our country, have we witnessed an eventful struggle between these great political sections. It consecrated as the contest of 1793, and it closed with the triumph of the popular party, two years after, in the elevation to the highest office of his country, of the champion and the candidate of democracy.

The same struggle has again been witnessed in our day. It is that which now rapidly hastens to its close. The dormant energies of thirty years are aroused; hopes suppressed but not dead were quickened into confidence; the hidden embers, that still burned beneath the ashes, were kindled into flame. All whom faction or party spirit could enlist, were banded together in common opposition to the popular cause. Their old enemies were forgotten; friendships the most ludicrous were formed; principles were abandoned without shame; and no artifice was neglected to lessen, to deceive, and to allure those whose principles and power they endeavored to supplant. Displaying, as had been done thirty years before, a mad confidence of success; they believed, from the calm silence of their opponents, that victory was gained. They exulted too soon in their fancied success. They showed too soon the real spirit by which they were actuated. They sustained and vindicated the impudent outrages of moneyed monopoly; they condemned without hearing, the chosen representative of the people; they drove from the public councils

of distinguished probity and genius; they disgraced the halls of legislation by paroxysms of passion; and from one end of the country to the other, they displayed a spirit of persecution and proscription, the most odious and unprecedented. But the democracy of the country remained unmoved. When their moment of action came, they rallied around the venerable man whom they had chosen as their leader, because his principles were their principles, his cause was their cause. The voice of the people, from Maine to Louisiana, gave prompt and undeniable evidence of success. Since then two years are not elapsed; yet the proud leaders who were at that time opposed to us, confident of success—where are they now? Even among their own followers there are none so poor to do them reverence.

Citizens of Pennsylvania! This was the second struggle of the American democracy; and it ended like the first. It only remains for us, now as then, to mark its termination as our fathers did, by elevating to the highest office in our gift its present champion and candidate. As Andrew Jackson renews, full of honors and of years, shall we fill his place with one who inherits & will support the same principles he has supported, will stand by the popular cause as he has stood by it, will oppose the old foes of democracy as he has opposed them? To ask such a question of the republicans of Pennsylvania, is to receive their answer. As they closed the contest of 1793, by a vote of unexampled unanimity for Thomas Jefferson, the selected candidate of their party, and the known advocate of their principles; so are they now ready, as we are well assured, to terminate with equal unanimity the contest of 1836, by elevating to the Presidency MARTIN VAN BUREN.

It were, indeed, a sufficient title to our support, that he is presented as its candidate, without a single competitor, by the democracy of every state in the Union. It would be sufficient that he has been every where singled out, as the object of bitterest opposition, by those very men and that very party, who are notoriously opposed to us and our principles. It would be sufficient that amidst all the unfortunate divisions in our own politics, and in moments, too, of the warmest excitement, there has been no difference of sentiment in regard to him, no distrust of his principles or apprehension of his conduct. Yes! these circumstances would alone insure him the support of republican Pennsylvania. But these are not the merits on which he rests, the claims on which he is entitled to your support. When the American people, in the exercise of their unbiased and voluntary choice, select a man as chief magistrate of fifteen millions of freemen, he is one whose principles they know, and of whose genius, character and virtues they are justly proud. Have they not a right to be proud of MARTIN VAN BUREN as a citizen, a statesman, and a man? Trace him from his youth upwards; he is found on every occasion, zealous and active in the cause of his country. Behold him called to high places of political trust; in every crisis his admirable talents are displayed, his honest sentiments boldly and properly avowed; as if to disprove the slanders of his opponents, the public records, open to every eye, display on every great question of policy his unequivocal opinion; he is seen throughout his whole career, the protector of the worn out veteran; the advocate and strenuous supporter of the late war; the friend of internal improvement in his native state though not of scrambling, lavish and indiscriminate expenditures by congress; the enemy of entangling foreign alliances; the prompt and manly opponent of reckless fanaticism; the uncompromising foe of a national bank. Turn off from the statesman to the man, for uncertain is the fruit of public service, not grafted on the stock of private morality and worth; against his virtues, inquisitive envy and inventive calumny have scarcely ventured to utter a single charge; in all the charities of life, in every social and domestic relation, he comes before his countrymen, without stain and without reproach. We do not condescend to compare him, in all these respects, with the persons selected by our opponents as their candidates for the Presidency, candidates with hardly a perceptible distinction, except notorious imbecility or political treachery; candidates who, with a sort of gratitude which the democrats of Pennsylvania are certainly unit to appreciate, have been suddenly thrust into the places of men prominent two years ago, and at least, possessing talents not to be denied, however much their principles may be disapproved. Were these singular candidates, however, less indisputably unfit, it is enough to deprive them of all claim to our confidence or support, to unite us in determined opposition to them, that they are brought forward, to sustain a political cause and political opinions, against which the democracy of Pennsylvania has been always openly and successfully contending. It would be a task as cheerless as invidious, to point out their inferiority to Martin Van Buren, in talents, intelligence, public service, political consistency, and private worth.

Nor have the republican party of the Union been unmindful of the qualities and sentiments of the man, whom they have named for the second office in its government.—RICHARD M. JOHNSON has, in a long life of public usefulness, proved himself the steady advocate of popular rights, the warm friend, and the gallant defender of his country.—His blood has been shed in her behalf; he bears honorable wounds gallantly received in her defence. His political career is marked by a devotion that has never flagged, to measures deeply interesting to the republic. Year after year, has he brought forward and advocated with untiring zeal, the cause of the poor and aged soldier; year after year has he resisted the various attempts, made in various forms, to introduce the plans of mistaken religious zeal; year after year has he contended for the abolition

of imprisonment for debt, of punishment for misfortune. These, and other noble and oft repeated actions, in the cause of enlightened philanthropy and true republicanism, have justly endeared him to his countrymen, give him a claim on their support, and make him worthy of their confidence and choice. We invoke then the Democracy of Pennsylvania, to aid in electing Martin Van Buren and Richard M. Johnson, to the high offices to which they have been nominated, because they are citizens worthy of that honor. But we invoke them much more anxiously to do so, because in their elevation they secure and maintain the ascendancy of free, just, enlightened, and liberal principles of government. If we succeed now the triumph of democracy is secured; its duration is rendered yet more certain, it will gain new vigour from the contest that has past; it will show that America hastens onward in the spirit of the age; it will prove that we keep the lead in the march of freedom now, as our forefathers took it, half a century ago. That we can succeed and that we ought to, who can doubt? Surely the object is worthy of every exertion. While it secures to us that which we confidently consider as connected with the present well being of our beloved country, it will at the same time give an example to those who are to come after us, when similar political contests shall arise; and it will contribute something, as we devoutly hope, to prolong those glorious institutions which we class among the choicest blessings, that Heaven has conferred upon our race.

Citizens of Pennsylvania! We have addressed you as members of the American Union; as part of that proud confederacy to which you have ever shown the most devoted affection. We have appealed to you to give renewed evidence of that affection at this important moment. We are sure that it still glows with an ardour not abated, and that it will unite you, heart and hand, with your brethren now, as it has done so often heretofore. Permit us, however, before we close to address you as Pennsylvanians; to address you as forming that republican phalanx, which has owed so much of its just influence abroad, to its unanimity, its ascendancy, its steady adherence to its principles, at home. Our divisions, by giving to our opponents a brief authority, have brought out, in lights the most glaring, the motives which will govern them. We have seen, in the headlong measures of a few short months, that once possessing the power, they will exert it, with shameful audacity, to fix upon the people of this commonwealth laws and institutions against which the whole spirit of democracy revolts. We are called at once to the rescue. Actions have made that voice so loud, that we cannot, we dare not, refuse to listen to it. The sacred altar of freedom has been recklessly profaned, by unworthy intruders who have invaded her sanctuary. It is our duty to redeem it from pollution; a duty which we have no right for a moment to postpone.

For seven months the opponents of the democratic party, representing a minority of the people, and strangely joined in discordant coalition, have wielded the government of this commonwealth. Look at the reckless conduct they have displayed in the guidance of power! Look at the laws which they have passed, and under which we are at this very moment forced to live, and tell us if there is a single democrat in our state who is willing passively to submit!

Not content with the period which has long sufficed for all the public business, an additional session of the legislature has been held, on pretexts the most flimsy, but in reality to prolong if possible, by political schemes, the power thus acquired and abused. An expenditure of thirty-two thousand dollars has been thus wrested from the earnings of the people, and added to their already accumulated taxes. The wishes of a large majority for a Convention, to alter and amend our form of government, instead of being promptly acceded to in accordance with that duty which a representative owes to a constituent, have been subjected to postponement equally unnecessary and improper. The legislative halls, which ought to be places for calm discussion, and temperate consideration of measures affecting the welfare of the commonwealth, have been converted into theatres of unprecedent intemperance; scurrilous declamation against those present, indecent abuse against the absent, have been poured forth without stint, in the confidence arising from an accidental superiority of numbers. Free citizens of this commonwealth have been summoned, in the midst of winter, from their homes, in direct violation of the provisions of the constitution. Honorable men, quietly pursuing the occupations of private life; ministers of the gospel, officiating at the holy altar; statesmen elected by the people to the most dignified offices of trust; have been questioned before a self-constituted tribunal, in regard to their private intercourse and conduct, rudely arrested in the midst of their defence, and reviled where they had not the privilege to reply. These are a few examples of the conduct of our opponents at the commencement of their reign. Will the freemen of Pennsylvania submit to their repetition or their increase?

But it is not only against their conduct in the transaction of public business, that our voices are to be lifted, and our efforts to be made? No. Their conduct has been riveted by their acts. Their laws are on a par with their department. The constitution has declared, in express language, that an apportionment of representatives is to be made every seven years, among the several counties, according to the number of their taxable inhabitants. This is the very first duty prescribed by the constitution to the legislature; it is the most solemn act of representative government; it is the source from which flows the pure spring of republican institutions; it is the mode by which the will of the people is to be ascertained and carried out. It has fallen to the lot

of those now in power, to perform that sacred duty; to behold the manner in which they have executed their trust. They have corrupted the current at its source; they have framed a law, manufactured for the very purpose of misrepresenting the sentiments of the majority; they have apportioned the representatives of counties, in notorious opposition to the number of taxable inhabitants. In the county of Lancaster they give 2800 inhabitants a representative, while in the county of Schuylkill 4700 have only the same. In the city of Philadelphia 2700 are entitled to this privilege, but in the very county that surrounds it 8900 have no greater. In the county of Chester 2900 may choose a representative; in the county of Westmoreland it requires 4190 to do so.—As if to render this gross injustice more striking, they have conferred on 2100 inhabitants of the very county in which they met, the county of Dauphin, the same rights that 4400 enjoy in the county of Lebanon, which is separated from it only by an imaginary line. Yet these legislators had the constitution lying before them. Had they been deaf to the calls of equal justice, they should at least have regarded the written commands of that instrument which they had solemnly sworn to support.

The same constitution declares that all elections shall be free and equal, and that every freeman of twenty-one, resident for two years, and having paid his tax within that time, shall enjoy the rights of an elector.—For one hundred and fifty years the elections of Pennsylvania have been equal; the citizens of the north and of the south, of the east and of the west, have been equal in the enjoyment of this privilege. It was reserved for the arbitrary rulers of 1836, to make one law for the citizens of Philadelphia, and another for the rest of the freemen of this commonwealth. Nay more; while it is the very spirit of the age to extend the elective franchise among the people, it was reserved for a legislature of republican Pennsylvania, to creep backwards in the march of freedom; to affix to a portion of her citizens a new qualification never required by the constitution; to establish a registry, in imitation of those foreign countries, where the people are slowly forcing their rights from impudent aristocracies. They have made our elections unequal; if they keep the power, will they long suffer them to be free. They have added the qualification of registry; if they keep the power, will it be long before they annex that of property and wealth?

It is scarcely two years since the people of Pennsylvania declared, with an energy, and in a manner that the most thoughtless could not mistake, their uncompromising hostility to the Bank of the United States. From one extremity of the state to the other, their voice was raised against its audacity. They beheld, with an indignation bleeded with contempt, a moneyed corporation, created to serve the community, assuming to dominate over the politics of the country, and the rights of its citizens. They united with the democracy of the Union, and as they believed, terminated its power. But it is not so. With the invasion of representative rights, & the infringement of the elective franchise, comes the Bank of the U.S. handed in hand. In proportion as our opponents diminish our privilege at the polls, they increase our subjection to the power of associated wealth. Nay! as if to mock the pride and consistency of our commonwealth, they call this high handed proceeding a Pennsylvania measure; they boast of it, perchance in bitter derision, as a benefit to Pennsylvania. If it were so, the yeomanry of our state have not yet learned to sacrifice political principles on the shrine of pecuniary advantage. But the history of the last four years must be blotted out, before any democrat can believe such an institution to be a benefit; before this state can consent to retain within its limits, a power which she has already seen both disposed and able to injure the whole American Union. We are told of its capital and credit; vain fallacy! it is in the resources, the enterprise and the labor of our citizens that these exist; they were neither brought to us, nor can be taken from us, by the stockholders of this bank. We are told of the funds it contributes to our public works; these funds are but the products of our own industry, collected in its vaults, & diminished by the portion it appropriates to itself; these contributions are but a trivial deduction from that profitable tribute which it intends to exact, during thirty years to come, from the earnings of our people.—We are told of its chartered privileges and its vested rights. We pretend not to prescribe the mode to be adopted, at the proper season, to relieve the Commonwealth from this insufferable weight; but we protest as Pennsylvanians—nay, as members of a social community, whose very foundation rests on the equal protection and equal welfare of all, we protest against the monstrous doctrines, that are confidently broached. We deny that where, by fraud, by accident, or even by want of foresight, a power shall be conferred for private benefit and for private ends, it is to be irrevocably fixed, although obtained in opposition to the known sentiments of a majority of the people, possessing or using the ability to elevate or depress at pleasure the value of their property, and exerting an influence utterly inconsistent with the nature of their government. The republicans of Pennsylvania will be the last to violate chartered privileges or vested rights. But they know these are chartered privileges belonging to every American freeman, infinitely more sacred than the charter of a bank; they know that vested rights, suddenly invented to assist the pecuniary profits of a corporation, cannot be paramount to those, which secure to every citizen the legitimate value of his property, and preserve from improper influence and corruption the government of his choice.

Citizens of Pennsylvania! In conclusion we repeat, that no previous period has more demanded all your energies, than the

present. As members of this glorious union, as children of a state dear to us as the blood by which we are animated; as Americans and as Pennsylvanians, we call upon you to stand forth in your strength. Not that there is cause to doubt of our success. We know there is none. But the lessons of democracy ought to be so pronounced as not to be mistaken; the errors of its opponents ought to be so punished as not to be repeated. Let us preserve, for our state, that character of unquestioned republican fidelity, which it has hitherto so proudly maintained; and let us, in this age, when, throughout all the civilized world, freedom seems to be irresistibly advancing, still press forward, the truest and the foremost, in the glorious career.

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