

AN  
ADDRESS

TO A

RESPECTABLE NUMBER OF CITIZENS,

FROM SEVERAL TOWNS IN PLYMOUTH COUNTY,

Convened in *HALIFAX,*

*July 4th, 1803,*

TO CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF

*American Independence.*

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By JOSEPH BARKER, A. M.

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## AN ADDRESS,

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*BRETHREN AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,*

WE are convened upon a joyful and important occasion. Our business is no other than to celebrate the anniversary of the *birth-day*, not of a nobleman, not of a king, not of a WASHINGTON; but of our NATION.

The day, when we emerged from the humble condition of dependent and oppressed colonies, and rose to that of Independent States, and took rank with the nations of the world, was a day too important to be forgotten by the friends of humanity in any part of the world, but especially by the inhabitants of the highly privileged United States of America.

Let us then, with heartfelt joy, and decent festivity, commemorate the day, gratefully acknowledging our obligations to the Supreme Disposer of all events.

It appears to be natural (and will, it is presumed, be agreeable to this patriotic audience) to have our

thoughts, upon this occasion, for a few moments, turn upon some of those events which occasioned the independency of our nation ;—the principles which produced it ;—some of the happy effects and consequences of it ; and measures, which, if steadily pursued, will probably secure and perpetuate the blessings arising from that favourable event.

That the country comprizing the United States of America, so extensive in its boundaries, so rich in its soil, with its population so rapidly increasing, and situated at such a local distance from its parent state, should, for any great length of time, continue to be dependent colonies of England, was an event, which could not rationally have been expected : Yet its separation from its parent country took place much sooner, than any expected. For the people of these states, though they had been compelled by the oppression of the English government, and the intolerance of its established religion, to leave their native country, and hazard their lives, families and effects upon a wide and boisterous ocean, to gain a quiet settlement in this at that time wilderness, the gloomy abode of savage beasts, and more savage men ;—I say, though the first settlers of this country were thus cruelly compelled to quit their native shores, or relinquish religious liberty ; yet, the descendants of those sufferers were so attached to that nation, having generally descended from it, having near relations still living there, and being of the same language and religion, that they would not have separated from them—nay, the thought of such a thing would have been irksome, had not events taken place, which forced them to do it.

We should no doubt have submitted to the government of England for several generations more, had it not most cruelly attempted to deprive us of our rightful privileges.

Sometimes, evil things are the occasion of great good. Some of our best enjoyments and sweetest comforts come unto us, in consequence of events, the most undesirable and grievous. Thus, it is evident, that the oppressive treatment, which we received from the government of our parent country, was the occasion of our independence, with its happy consequences. We should cheerfully have submitted much longer to a servile dependence on them, if they had not unwisely and cruelly attempted to deprive us of what liberty and privileges we did possess. But, as they meant it not for our benefit, we may justly withhold our thanks from them.

The political sentiments, which we had imbibed at that day strongly militated against our tamely submitting to their oppressive decrees, and tyrannical measures.

We *then* believed, that civil government was designed and instituted for the benefit of the people at large, and not for the emolument of a few individuals ;—not to enrich or aggrandize a few, at the expense of the public ; but to restrain the unrighteous and oppressive, and protect the lives, liberty and property of the community.

We then believed, that the supreme power is in the people ; that no rulers have power, until delegated to them by the people ; nor, for any other purposes than those specified ; that every people, or na-

tion, have a right to choose their own form of government, and to appoint what men they please to administer it, and to hold them accountable for the manner of their administration. For, at that day, the word *democracy*, had no frightful sound; nor were our greatest and best men ashamed to call themselves DEMOCRATS.

We believed it to be the duty of a people cheerfully to pay taxes for the support of their government and national defence; but that taxes could not *righteously* be demanded of a people, by a legislature, in choosing of which they had no voice, and in which they were not represented.

This was the ground of our contention with the British government, which occasioned our separation. The British parliament, in which we had no representative, presumed to make a law for collecting taxes, from these then American colonies. The famous Stamp Act was passed, A. D. 1765, which was very alarming to the inhabitants of this country; being opposite to all our sentiments and ideas of liberty and righteousness: But it met with such spirited opposition in all these colonies, as to procure its repeal the next year. But the English parliament, though they repealed this offensive act, still firmly adhered to their unjustifiable design of taxing these colonies; and imposed a duty on several articles of import, which were of great use to us, to be collected in this country. But the Americans, ever the lovers of liberty, and tenacious of their rights, manfully resisted, till all those duties were taken off, except three pence per pound on tea. But the British parliament, left these concessions to the remonstrances of the Ameri-

cans should be construed as a relinquishment of their claim, were so cautious as to make, at the time of repealing those disgusting acts, a solemn declaration, *That they had a right to make laws binding in all cases whatsoever upon their colonies.*

The paying the duty of three pence per pound on tea imported, as it was so trifling a sum, and would not enhance the price of that article to the consumer, was a matter of no consequence with the Americans : But the *principle* was what they opposed. And they opposed it with firmness ; for, if not resisted at first, they knew not to what lengths it would go, nor where it would stop ; and if we allowed their right to tax us at all, we must allow them to say, whether it should be a *penny*, or a *pound* ; they must tax us as much as they pleased, which, probably, would have been as much as we could pay. But the Americans very prudently opposed that principle at first, and utterly refused to pay one *three pence*, lest that should be a precedent for the exaction of millions.

But the English government could not make any further concession, without wholly relinquishing their principle, which they were determined never to do ; therefore, being provoked by our spirited resistance, they adopted measures to force us into a compliance. They enacted one oppressive law after another, subjecting some of our towns to great inconveniences and distresses ; the effect of which was, instead of frightening us into submission, to exasperate, and make us more united, and resolute in our opposition.

They also being determined to carry their point, proceeded from step to step, till they began hostili-

ties. We carried on a defensive war, still petitioning and remonstrating to the king, and hoping for a reconciliation, till at length, being convinced that there was no prospect of it, without a surrendry of our liberty, and finding it to be difficult to carry on the war, or to have any foreign aid, while we were subjects of the British government, the Congress declared us to be INDEPENDENT STATES, abjured all allegiance to the British crown, and renounced all political connexion with that nation.

This was done on the 4th of July, A. D. 1776. A memorable day !

To maintain this independency, and defend the liberties of our country, we were obliged, under great disadvantages, to carry on a war of eight years, expensive of blood and treasure. Many of the amiable sons of America resigned up their lives in defence of the liberties of their bleeding country. But our zeal for liberty, and spirited exertions, by the smiles of a benign Providence, forced at length our unnatural enemy, after having sacrificed many thousands of their brave soldiers, (who were worthy of dying in a better cause) and greatly increased their enormous national debt, to acknowledge our independence, and give over their fruitless war.

Such a long, bloody and expensive war ought not to be but for some important object ; and, if *successful*, ought to be productive of much good. The sentiment of the Americans, at that day, was, That life without liberty was not worth preserving. Since that day, the rapid increase of our nation, our great prosperity, and the unparalleled happiness of the peo-

ple at large, in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, are irrefragable evidences of the benefit of our independence. When did a nation ever increase in wealth and population as ours hath done, since our independence? And when did any people ever enjoy such liberty, and mild and equitable government?

But, the benefits, resulting from our independence, are not confined to our nation. It has occasioned an increase of political knowledge, led other people to understand their rights, and kindled in their breasts the love of liberty; it has caused kings and despots to tremble on their thrones; it has occasioned a wonderful revolution in the government of the largest nation in Europe, and emancipated many millions of people from the most cruel despotism, under which they had groaned for ages.

Great changes in the circumstances and connexions of all the powers of Europe, which we trust will eventually be for the benefit of mankind, have been occasioned by our independence, and our principles of free government. Those principles, which produced our independence, are fast spreading in the world, and will, we hope and believe, ere long diffuse civil and religious liberty amongst all the nations of the earth.

Though our privileges and prosperity are great, arising from our independence; yet they can be lost. Our liberty may be wrested out of our hands. And if our liberty be lost, with it we lose the benefits of independence. For independence is of little value without liberty. If we be slaves, it is but of little

*Politic*  
*Hopkin*  
B  
*Can Liberty and Dependence  
Exist together?*



consequence whether it be to our own countrymen, or foreigners.

As our liberty was obtained, by the vigilance and exertions of the people; so it must be defended. The blessings flowing from our independence, cannot be secured and perpetuated, if the people grow careless of their privileges, and neglect constantly to watch and guard against every encroachment upon their rights.

It must be acknowledged, however derogatory it may be to the dignity of human nature, that there is in man a selfish disposition, by which some, in all ages and countries, are prompted to seek their own wealth and grandeur, at the expense of the rights of others. There are always those, who are willing to give up the liberty of their country and posterity, for their own emolument. Hence a republican government is always in danger of being subverted, unless the people be always attentive to their privileges, and keep a watchful eye upon those, who are in possession of power.

If we would retain, and transmit down to posterity, the great blessings arising from our independence, we ought never to lose sight of those principles of government, which occasioned our separation from Great Britain. Those principles are as just, and as important, now, as ever they were. We ought resolutely to defend our republican government; for without *that* our independence is of no value.

If we once give up our representative government, and admit of hereditary Presidents or Senators, liberty is lost;—and government, being no longer of the

people, will cease to be administered for their benefit: But the great mass of the people will be impoverished and oppressed, that a few unprincipled mortals may riot in luxury, and wallow in sensuality.

Let the people retain in their memory, that the sovereignty is in the people—that government is instituted for the benefit of the people—that power is delegated, by the people, to their elected rulers, to make such laws, if consistent with the constitution, as *they* think will be beneficial to the community; and let the people feel their obligations to obey the laws, which their rulers may make, considering the dangerous tendency of an insurrection against government. An insurrection against a bad law will be a precedent for others to raise an insurrection against a good law; and, in that way, all government may be obstructed, and anarchy ensue. On this account, *to obey* a bad law is a less evil, than forcibly to *resist* it.

If an insurrection can be excited in opposition to a law, made by the representatives of the people, it will give occasion to the enemies of a representative government to say, That people cannot bear liberty; they must have a stronger government. And is it not probable, that sometimes insurrections have been promoted, *designedly*, by some ambitious rulers, to destroy liberty, and establish themselves in power, independently of the people?

To thwart such friends of tyranny, in their wicked artifice, let the people always refuse, while they have the privilege of frequently electing their rulers, to rise against them, and violently oppose the operation of their laws.

But, let the people never forget, that they have a right to speak, and write, and publish their sentiments respecting any law, which shall be enacted, or any measures, which shall be adopted by their rulers. All the Bills of Rights, stated in our several constitutions, shew this to be the mind and will of the people; and that they never meant to relinquish this right. It ought, therefore, to be considered as despotism, or usurpation of power, to make a law to prohibit people's speaking, or publishing, their opinion concerning any law, or measures, established by their rulers. If people exercise this right, it will always be in their power to reform any errors in their government, in a peaceable and constitutional manner.

But, if people suffer this right to be taken from them, bad men who are in office will contrive to keep themselves there, till they have opportunity, after introducing one innovation and another, utterly to subvert the constitution, and establish "*a strong government,*" which will cause the people to groan, when their liberty is irretrievably lost.

People must retain the idea of their supremacy, of their privilege of electing rulers, and of the responsibility of their rulers unto them, or their liberty is lost.

Republicans are not apt to be jealous. They are prone to think, that their representatives, as they are dependent on them for their power, will seek to promote their interest. They trust in them, and grow remiss in their watchfulness, and then their liberty is

in jeopardy, and, sometimes, lost beyond recovery, before they can be roused.

Jealousy and distrust of rulers may be unreasonable and excessive; but the greatest danger lies on the other hand. To watch an honest man will not hurt him: Not to watch one of a different character will give him an opportunity to hurt you.

Remember that rulers are but men, and that men have a fondness for power, influence and grandeur; and that, to obtain these, they will, sometimes, put on any appearance, and make any profession. A Judas and an Arnold are never wanting.

Many of the greatest despots have obtained their power, after rendering themselves popular, by professing a great regard to the rights of the people. It is safe to believe a man's profession, when his actions accord with it.

The people of the United States have had one alarm, since the establishment of our Federal Government. They feared, and perhaps not without reason, that their liberty was in danger. When they perceived that the late administration was, from time to time, increasing their taxes, laying new burdens upon them, multiplying officers dependent on the Executive, and thereby increasing his influence; enlarging the national debt, and raising a standing army, in a time of peace;—and, in addition to all these things, had enacted a law, the tendency of which was, if not the design, to render people afraid to animadvert upon the measures of government;—when they saw these things, the people took the

alarm, and saved themselves. A little longer security might have proved fatal. But by a timely and prudent exercise of their privilege of electing rulers, they obtained a change of men in administration, and thereby a happy change of measures. Thus “the snare is broken, and,” *for the present*, “we are escaped.”

From the known abilities and virtues of JEFFERSON; his integrity, humanity, love of liberty, and stability in republican principles, we anticipated peace and prosperity under his administration; and we have not been disappointed.

Under the late administration, such ways were devised for the expending of money, that our national debt, notwithstanding the taxes upon houses and lands, and carriages, and the excise, was increased more than a million and a half of dollars.

But the present administration, by the abolition of useless offices, and a reduction of expenditures in other ways, have been able greatly to diminish the burdens of the people—to repeal the excise law, and take off the house and land taxes; and yet defray national expenses, support public credit, maintain a war with one of the Barbary powers, and, besides, appropriate a large sum to cancel the principal of our national debt.

I congratulate you, my fellow-citizens, on this happy change. I congratulate my country on account of their precious privileges, and their present fortunate choice of rulers. I congratulate them in their having such a wise, philosophic, philanthropic

man, at the head of the government ; a man, who was very active in effecting our independence, and whose masterly pen produced that declaration, which constituted us an independent and happy nation ; and who, since FRANKLIN and WASHINGTON are no more, is the glory of the United States.

But let not our present prosperity put us off our guard. Let us always be attentive to our elections, and take care that men of principle, and republican principles, fill our State and Federal Legislatures. Let us see that our government be kept purely republican, that is, a representative democracy. This is a duty, which we owe to our fathers and brethren, who paid their blood to purchase our privileges. It is a duty which we owe to posterity ; we ought not willingly, or carelessly, deprive them of that goodly heritage, which God has committed to our keeping.

It is a duty, which we owe to mankind. We can, and ought to show the world, that liberty and government are compatible. This is the only kind of government, which is rational. And it is the strongest government : For when people perceive that government is administered for their good ; that the public good is sought, they will support it. Sedition laws, and standing armies to awe people to submission will be unnecessary : For people will feel themselves bound by their own interest to support their government.

An insurrection against a government, of such magnitude as to be dangerous, cannot be excited by all the intrigues of artful men, unless the government

hath done wrong, and some way oppressed the people. But, in such a case, the people are not always prudent, and do not always take suitable and peaceable measures to obtain redress of grievances; but suffer their passions to be inflamed, by the art of ambitious and dishonest men, who hope to gain by war, confusion and revolution.

May our liberty and republican government be continued, and transmitted down to our latest posterity; and may despotic government be banished from the earth, and all nations, and all men become and remain FREE! And let all the people say, *AMEN.*